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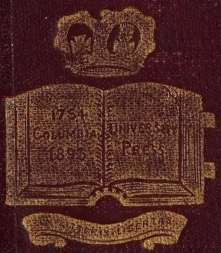

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BISMARCK

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GERMAN UNITY

BY

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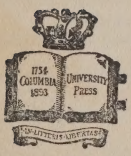

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PREFACE

THE first edition of this book was little more than a reprint of an article which appeared in the New York *Evening Post* and, in part, in *The Nation*, immediately after Bismarck's death in 1898. In a second edition (1910) the original sketch was slightly revised and somewhat expanded; and in an appendix was reprinted, in revised form, an essay on "Bismarck as a Phrase Maker," which originally appeared in *The Bookman*. This essay is included in the present edition, in the hope, as was stated in the preface of 1910, that it "may serve to humanize the portrait of the statesman by bringing into clearer view some of his more personal traits and, in particular, his humour."

In its present form the volume represents a revision so extensive, so much of it has been re-written and so much new matter added, that it may fairly be said to be a new book.

For so thorough-going a revision there were two chief reasons. One of these was personal. At the outbreak of the World War, the diplomatic blunders of the central empires led the author to make a new and more intensive study of Bismarck's diplomatic methods. The results of this investigation were published in an article entitled "Military Strategy *versus* Diplomacy," which first appeared in the *Political Science Quarterly* in March, 1915.[1] It is included in a collection of the author's war papers entitled: *Militarism and Statecraft* (Putnam's, 1918). In condensed form, the results of this investigation are included in the present volume. Included also is a collection of Bismarck's forecasts and warnings, drawn from his utterances after his retirement and from his memoirs. Many of his predictions have been signally verified, and the wisdom of his unheeded warnings has been demonstrated by Germany's disasters.

A second and more weighty reason why

[1] In a revised and somewhat expanded form, this article appeared during the war in German, French, Dutch, Danish and Swedish translations.

this book had to be re-written is that the earlier text was in many respects antiquated. For the study of Bismarck's domestic policies as Prussian premier and as imperial chancellor we have new material, but this gives us little more than supplementary details. Nor has much new light been thrown on Bismarck's foreign policies prior to 1871. In these matters nothing has been revealed which necessitates a different view of his activities or an altered judgment of his achievements. But for the study of international politics and of Bismarck's diplomacy from 1871 to 1890 we now have data far more authentic than we possessed before the close of the World War. The Russian, Austrian and German revolutions of 1917–1918 released official documents which under normal circumstances would have slumbered for generations in the "most secret" archives of the three imperial foreign offices. Private memoirs and reminiscences also have been published, which, but for the overthrow of the three dynasties, would not have seen the light for many years. Although

this new material does not essentially modify our conception of the ends which Bismarck strove to attain, it gives us a far clearer view of the various and often devious paths through which these ends were pursued.

At the present moment, when the empire that Bismarck built lies in ruin and half of Europe is in chaos; when the world is looking forward with mingled hope and doubt to a new era, in which the dangerous tendencies of nationalism are to be checked either by popular government or by a sane internationalism or by both combined; when no statesman will venture to predict what the morrow will bring forth, much less to forecast the state of Europe and of the world a generation hence — at such a time it is unthinkable that a final judgment should be passed on the value of Bismarck's work.

If Germany remains united, as now seems probable, Bismarck will always be remembered as the founder of its unity. A total change in German forms of government will affect his place in history as little as similar

changes in England and in France have affected the world's judgment of William the Conqueror or of Richelieu.

If the Germans do not solve successfully the problems of popular government, or if they are unable to maintain German unity under such a political system, the future historian may be less critical than we are disposed to be to-day regarding Bismarck's autocratic tendencies.

If our hopes of a better world order, in which international coöperation shall increasingly supplant international rivalry and conflict, prove unrealizable; if democracy proves as intensely and narrowly nationalistic as aristocracy or monarchy; it may be doubted whether the statesmen who direct the policies of the great powers will be able to maintain standards of international conduct essentially different from those that prevailed in the nineteenth century. If, on the other hand, the better world order to which we are looking forward shall be realized, however gradually, Bismarck and Rechberg, Gortschakoff and Gramont, may

seem to the future historian politicians of precisely the same species, political "dragons of the prime," differing less in rapacity than in efficiency.

In the revision of this volume consistent effort has been made to keep its bulk within moderate bounds. As was said in the preface to the first edition, "it is believed that such a summary as is here offered will be useful to those who are too busy to read many thick books, and to those who wish a more sharply outlined impression than is readily obtained from a mass of details." It will be most useful, however, if it awakens or increases its readers' interest in an important historical movement, dominated and directed by a remarkable personality, and if it sends some of them to fuller histories and biographies.

COLUMBIA UNIVERSITY, August, 1923.

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From the beginning of my career I have had but the one guiding star: By what means and in what way can I bring Germany to unity? and in so far as this end has been attained: How can I strengthen this unity and increase it and give it such form that it shall be enduringly maintained with the free consent of all coöperating forces? — BISMARCK IN THE GERMAN IMPERIAL DIET, JULY 9, 1879.

BISMARCK
AND
GERMAN UNITY

Otto Edward Leopold von Bismarck was born at Schönhausen in the Old Mark of Brandenburg, province of Saxony, kingdom of Prussia, April 1, 1815. He came of a line of country gentlemen, whose main business was always the care of their estates in the Mark and in Pomerania, but who incidentally, like most Brandenburg gentlemen, served their princes in war and sometimes as diplomatists or administrative officials. The record of the family runs back to the thirteenth century, and the estate of Schönhausen has been in its possession for more than three hundred years. On the mother's side Bismarck came of plainer people, but among these also were servants of the state. His maternal grandfather, Mencken, entered the Prussian civil

Birthplace

Paternal ancestry

Maternal ancestry

service under Frederick the Great and, as chief of the cabinet of Frederick William III, proposed some of the reforms which Stein afterwards effected.

Social position

The country gentlemen of Prussia held, in Bismarck's youth, a position not unlike that of the landed gentry of England. They were the governing class and managed the affairs of their districts; and the country squire who developed an exceptional talent for administration passed easily and naturally from the government of his neighborhood to the administration of the province or of the kingdom. By way of preparation for these duties and possibilities, the future landholder sometimes studied law and even entered the judicial or administrative service of the state, without necessarily intending to become either an advocate or a professional official. In accordance with this excellent usage, the young Bismarck, at the age of seventeen, was matriculated in the law faculty at Göttingen and spent three semesters as a student in that university — but, if Göttingen traditions are to be

Education

trusted, can not be said to have studied there. At Berlin, however, where he completed his law course, he must have studied; for he passed the state examination with credit and entered the state service. It was his hope to qualify for a diplomatic career; but one year in the Berlin city court and parts of three years in administrative work at Aix and at Potsdam changed his views; and, at the age of twenty-four, he assumed with his brother Bernhard the care of his father's Pomeranian estates. For eight years the future chancellor of the German empire devoted himself to sheep-raising and grain-growing, relieving the monotony of his life by hard riding and occasional hard drinking, but also by hard reading and travel. In 1845 he became a member of the Pomeranian Diet. The death of his father, in the same year, gave him the ancestral seat of Schönhausen in the province of Saxony. Here he was made superintendent of dikes; and here also he was chosen, not to membership, indeed, but to a first alternacy in the Diet.

Life in the country 1839–47

He had gained the confidence of his fellow squires; and when, in 1847, Frederick William IV attempted to solve the parliamentary problem by collecting at Berlin the members of the eight provincial Diets, a vacancy in the representation of the "Saxon knighthood" gave Bismarck seat and voice in the first session of the United Diet.

Entry into public life

German politics 1815–48

It was an uneasy time in Prussia and in Germany when the United Diet came together, and it was soon to be a stormy time. The German people were dominated by two aspirations, popular sovereignty and national unity. That these objects were not merely distinct but also, under the conditions then existing, incompatible, the people wholly failed to realize. The two ideas had gained their hold upon the German mind in the same historic period — that of the first French revolution and the revolutionary wars (1789–1815). The revolution had infected the Germans with the democratic fever, and the subjugation and humiliation of Germany by Napoleon had

awakened a specific German patriotism and shown the necessity of national union. In the war of liberation (1813–14) the German governments, and notably the Prussian government, had appealed to both these popular ideas. They had promised the people liberty and unity. When the victory was won, when Napoleon was dethroned and France reduced to its pre-revolutionary boundaries, the German governments broke their pledges. Germany was organized, at the Congress of Vienna (1815), into a loose confederation of sovereign states; and in the majority of these states, including Prussia and Austria, the princes retained absolute power. The people naturally lost all faith in their rulers and began to look to a popular uprising and the establishment of popular sovereignty as the only means of national unification. This connection of ideas determined the creed of both parties. As the nationalists were nearly all Liberals, and to a great extent Democrats, so, by an inevitable antithesis, nearly all the Conservatives were particu-

larists, identifying the maintenance of princely power with the system of state sovereignty and German disunity. All agitation in favor of national unity was punished as treason.

Revolution of March 1848

The paralysis of princely government in 1848 gave the Liberals an unexpected opportunity to attempt the realization of their programme: unity through liberty. The Paris insurrection and the dethronement of Louis Philippe kindled the flame of revolution throughout Germany; and everywhere, at first, the German revolutionists achieved complete success. All the German princes who had thus far retained absolute power gave or promised constitutions; and those who had already given constitutions appointed Liberal ministers and promised Liberal reforms. Prussia and Austria succumbed to the popular movement as completely as the little states; and Austria, the bulwark of conservatism, was threatened with destruction by simultaneous insurrections in Hungary and Italy. Constitutional liberty seemed assured, and the

Popular unity movement

Liberal leaders had for the moment a free field for their attempt to secure national unity. A German parliament, elected by universal suffrage, met at Frankfort and addressed itself to the task of framing a national constitution for a new German empire.

Frankfort Parliament

It was characteristic of the *doctrinaire* spirit of the movement that the central and vital point of the whole question was the last to be considered. There were in Germany two great states, either of which was stronger than all the little states together; and the prime question was: Which of these two states, Prussia or Austria, shall have the hegemony in the new Germany? But as neither of these states would peacefully submit to the rule of the other, the question immediately restated itself: Which of these two states is to be excluded from the new Germany? The answer could not be doubtful. Prussia was the more modern and progressive of the two states, and in the customs union it had brought all the German states except Austria

Austria or Prussia?

Leadership offered to Prussia

into commercial unity. The Parliament finally excluded Austria from the empire, and offered the imperial crown to Frederick William IV of Prussia. But this result was not attained until the spring of 1849. In 1848, when all the petty princes were terrorized by the revolution and the Austrian empire was struggling for existence, the scheme might conceivably have been realized. In 1849 the reaction had begun: the princes had largely recovered their courage and reëstablished their power, and Austria had fought through the worst of its embarrassments. In 1849, therefore, the offer of the imperial crown to Frederick William IV was simply an invitation to him to mobilize his army and fight for it. The success of such a venture was doubtful; and from the Conservative point of view the stake was not worth the risk. The Liberals in the Frankfort Parliament had gained the adhesion of the Democrats and secured a majority only by making the constitution of the new empire so democratic that the emperor would have been

only a figurehead. Frederick William of Prussia accordingly refused the imperial crown, and the revolutionary experiment was at an end. The Liberal programme had failed, as in the light of history it was bound to fail. No confederation has ever been rebuilt into a nation without the cement of blood.

Prussian refusal

For Prussia, however, the recognition of its necessary hegemony by the representatives of the German people had a certain moral value — a value all the greater because the recognition was tardy and reluctant. The Prussian government endeavored to utilize this advantage in 1849 and 1850 by negotiations with the North German princes. A treaty of alliance was concluded with Saxony and Hanover for a "restricted union"; nearly all the lesser states accepted the proposal; and a second constituent Parliament met at Erfurt in the spring of 1850. But the adhesion of Saxony and Hanover was not even half-hearted; there was no heart or sincerity in it. These states were simply tempo-

Princely movement for unity 1849–50

Erfurt Parliament

rizing with Prussia. They were really averse to the proposed union and were engaged in simultaneous negotiations with Austria. For a brief space, in 1850, Prussia and Austria seemed likely to come to blows and the German question to a solution. But Russia threw its whole influence and threatened to throw its whole force on the side of Austria; and Prussia, in the convention of Olmütz, November 29, 1850, yielded every point in dispute. The old confederation was reëstablished in all its old impotence, and the Federal Diet resumed its sessions at Frankfort.

Olmütz

Bismarck's Toryism

What was Bismarck's position on all these questions? Towards the constitutional movement in Prussia his attitude was one of bitter and uncompromising hostility. In the United Diet of 1847–48 he figured as a Tory of the Tories. He was more royalist than the king, and opposed every diminution of the kingly prerogatives. When in the spring of 1848 the king promised a constitution and the United Diet passed

an address of thanks, Bismarck was one of the few who voted against the address. He accepted the situation, he declared, because he could not help it; but he was not willing to close his activity in the Diet with the lying assertion that he was thankful for what he was obliged to regard as a mistake. When the king summoned a representative assembly to frame the promised constitution, Bismarck refused to stand for election. When the king dissolved this assembly, published a constitution of his own and ordered new elections, Bismarck accepted a mandate as deputy in the new Diet; but this he did only on the personal solicitation of the king.

Attitude toward the unity movement

Toward the popular unity movement his attitude was that of an unfriendly critic. He approved the king's refusal of the imperial title offered by the Frankfort Parliament, because the Frankfort constitution would make the emperor "the vassal" of the Radicals. "The Frankfort crown," Bismarck said, "may be very brilliant; but the gold which gives truth to

its brilliancy is to be gotten by putting the Prussian crown into the melting pot." Bismarck sat in the Erfurt Parliament, but he saw clearly the hopelessness of its attempts and occupied himself in throwing cold water upon the enthusiasts. During the Austro-Prussian disputes of 1850 he voted with the Austrophils in the Prussian Diet, and defended the convention of Olmütz.

Envoy at Frankfort 1851–59

When the German confederation was reestablished, Frederick William IV sent Bismarck to the Frankfort Diet as the representative of Prussia. This appointment elicited hostile comment. The Frankfort Diet was nothing but a standing congress of ambassadors, and the appointment of a man without diplomatic training was a breach of Prussian traditions. Upon the Prussian representative at Frankfort, moreover, rested in large measure the defense of Prussia's German interests, and the appointment of a pronounced friend of Austria seemed likely to result in a sacrifice of these interests. Bismarck undoubtedly owed his

appointment to his legitimist, or rather absolutist, attitude in Prussian politics. His defense of the royal prerogative had won him the confidence of the king. His attitude towards Austria made his appointment particularly suitable. After Olmütz, it would have been absurd for Prussia to send to Frankfort an ambassador who was not *persona grata* to Austria.

Bismarck's appointment was no error. His attitude towards Austria resulted in no sacrifice of Prussia's interests. His support of Austria during his parliamentary career had been dictated by party policy. The Conservatives rightly regarded Austria as the bulwark of conservatism, and Bismarck was a thorough Conservative. At Frankfort, however, he ceased to be a Conservative and became simply a Prussian. He found the Austrian influence in the ascendant and saw that this influence was constantly used to thwart Prussia's plans and injure Prussia's prospects. Before he had been in Frankfort a year, the adroitness and the persistence with which he countered the

Change of views

Austrian schemes made him *persona ingrata* at Vienna, and repeated effects were made in the following years to secure his recall.

The Frankfort correspondence

For this period of Bismarck's career very full data were early available, because the greater part of his Frankfort correspondence, including not only official despatches but also confidential letters to the Prussian prime minister, was published in 1884. These despatches and letters are of such literary excellence as to make them one of the monuments of classical German prose; of such intrinsic value that no history of the period can be written without consulting them; and they show such breadth of view and keenness of insight as fully to explain the advancement of the writer to the highest position in the Prussian state. The business actually transacted in the Frankfort Diet was petty and unimportant to the last degree; but Frankfort was a central point of European intrigue, and the most vital questions of European politics were touched in Bismarck's despatches. The king and his minister-president, Manteuffel, consulted

their representative at Frankfort upon all leading questions of state policy; and his advice seems commonly to have been followed. This was notably the case during the Crimean war, when France, England and Austria sought to draw Prussia into an attitude of hostility to Russia, and Bismarck convincingly maintained the absence of any Prussian interest in the war and the impolicy of aiding Austria. His Frankfort experiences had caused him to believe that, in the existing condition of European and German affairs, Austria was Prussia's natural enemy. He wrote in 1856:

Hostility to Austria

> In every century since the time of Charles V, German dualism has settled its relations by an internal war, fought to the finish; and in the present century also there will be no other way of setting the clock of our development at the right hour. . . . I desire to express my conviction that at no distant time we shall have to fight with Austria for our existence.

And in 1859, just after the outbreak of the Italian war, he wrote that the embarrassments of Austria gave Prussia an ex-

ceptional opportunity to readjust its relations to Germany; that these relations amounted, for Prussia, to a disease; and that this disease, unless radically cured at some such favorable moment, would have to be treated, sooner or later, *ferro et igni*. Here is already the line of thought which led to the war of 1866 and the formation of the North German confederation; and here is also, in its first form, the famous phrase, *Eisen und Blut*.

A German policy

In the following year, alluding to rumors of his own leanings toward a French alliance, he wrote to a friend: "If I have sold myself, it is to a Teutonic and not to a Gallic devil"; and in another letter he declared that he could not see why Prussia should shrink so coyly from the idea of a representative German parliament.

Ambassador to Russia 1859–62

The letters last cited were written from St. Petersburg. Bismarck's hostility to Austria had become so pronounced that the Prussian government, not yet prepared to accept his policy, had deemed it advisable to promote him out of Frankfort and, as he himself expressed it, to "put him on ice"

on the Neva. Here he remained as Prussian ambassador for three years.

William I (1861–88)

During the latter part of Bismarck's term of service at Frankfort, King Frederick William IV had been attacked by a disease of the brain, and in 1858 his brother, Prince William, had assumed the regency. In 1861 Frederick William died, and the prince regent became king. The chief reason for Prussia's humiliating submission at Olmütz was the imperfect condition of its army; and King William, a soldier before all things, was resolved upon a thorough reorganization of "the instrument." The plan involved a serious increase in the budget, and this the Chamber of Deputies refused. Foreseeing an obstinate conflict, the king wavered for a time between two courses: abdication or the enforcement of the royal will in spite of the Deputies. If he chose the latter course, he needed as premier a man completely devoted to prerogative, resolute in action and fearless of consequences; and there was no man among

Reform of the army

Opposition of the Diet

his subjects who possessed these qualities in a higher degree than his ambassador at St. Petersburg. The minister of war, von Roon, whom the king liked and trusted above all his advisers and who was a friend of Bismarck, was persistent in urging Bismarck's appointment. Early in 1862 Bismarck was recalled from Russia, apparently with a view to his becoming prime minister; but the king could not yet make up his mind and Bismarck was sent to Paris. In the autumn of the same year von Roon telegraphed: "*Periculum in mora*"; and Bismarck returned to Berlin and was appointed president of the Prussian ministry.

Bismarck ambassador to France

Minister-president

William's distrust of Bismarck

Contemporary letters and memoirs explain King William's hesitation: they indicate that at this time (1862) the king neither quite liked Bismarck nor fully trusted him. The dislike was caused, in part, by Bismarck's extreme frankness and frequent brusqueness of speech; the distrust was not of Bismarck's ability or loyalty but of his discretion. Under both sentiments lay, as Erich Marcks has shrewdly suggested, the

natural antipathy which common sense feels toward genius.

Bismarck's management of William

Bismarck was called to the premiership because he undertook to secure the reorganization of the army in spite of the Deputies, and because he convinced the king that this could be done without violating the constitution. It was not William's intention to abandon the personal direction of Prussia's general policy. In fact, however, it was Bismarck's will and not the king's that determined Prussian action from 1862 to 1866 and German action from 1867 to 1888. This result was not reached without friction nor without occasional crises. William possessed too strong a character to accept, without resistance, plans that he only partially comprehended and ventures of which he could not foresee the outcome. He was also, with all his ambition, too conscientious a man to do what he thought wrong. Bismarck, however, had a remarkable power of lucid statement and of coercive reasoning; and when persuasion failed, he did not hesitate to break the king's resistance

by the irresistible logic of events. In many cases William doubtless failed to see that the situation which constrained him had been deliberately created by his minister. There can be little question that in 1866 he as firmly believed Austria to be the aggressor as he believed France to be the aggressor in 1870. To Bismarck, William's reluctances were often troublesome; but they had for Prussia a value which Bismarck did not fail to recognize: they minimized the impression of unscrupulousness which the iron and blood policy inevitably created.

Parliamentary conflict 1862–66

During the first four years of Bismarck's administration, Prussia's internal politics were extremely simple although very stormy. Each year the Deputies refused to vote the increased military appropriations. Each year the Diet was dissolved and new elections ordered. Each new election increased the antigovernmental majority. But the people, even when the agitation was hottest, continued to pay their taxes; and the upper house, which was completely under the

control of the government, voted the desired appropriations. The money was then spent by the government without authorization from the Deputies, and the army was reorganized according to the plans of the king and his minister of war.

Foreign policy 1862–66

Prussia's foreign policy during these years, on the other hand, seems intricate and tortuous. Essentially, however, it was simple, and each step was directed to a single end. Bismarck had assumed the direction of Prussia's affairs with the purpose of solving the German question by establishing the hegemony of Prussia. This could be done only after a successful war with Austria. To assure Prussia's triumph, Austria must remain isolated, and to that end Prussia must maintain cordial relations with France and Russia. So far, all was clear, but the tactics by which these strategic aims were to be realized could not be determined in advance: they depended necessarily upon the course of events. Bismarck had devoted his three years in St. Petersburg to cementing the friendly relations already existing be-

Austria

Russia

tween Russia and Prussia and had obtained assurance that Russia would not interfere again, as in 1850, in behalf of Austria. During his brief mission in France he seems to have convinced himself that Napoleon III would also remain neutral. As president of the ministry, one of his earliest acts was to conclude a liberal commercial treaty with France; and the insurrection of 1863 in Russian Poland enabled him to render useful aid to the Russian government. The re-opening of the Schleswig-Holstein question, in the same year, touched Germany more nearly; and this question, as Bismarck handled it, led directly to the solution of the German problem.

France

Schleswig-Holstein question

The Schleswig-Holstein question, although a complicated one, is not so unintelligible as is commonly supposed. These two German duchies had long been united with Denmark; but they were not parts of Denmark, for the union was purely personal: it resulted from the fact that their dukes had become kings of Denmark. The Danes

naturally desired to make the union a real one. In the way of their ambition stood the facts that Holstein belonged to the German confederation and that old treaties guaranteed that Schleswig and Holstein should never be separated. Hence the incorporation of Schleswig was impossible without the simultaneous incorporation of Holstein, and the incorporation of Holstein was impossible without the assent of Germany — an assent which the Danes could not hope to obtain. This complicated state of things had already caused much trouble. In the revolutionary year of 1848 the Schleswig-Holsteiners had risen against the Danes and attempted to establish their independence, and Germany had actively supported the movement. But when the German revolution was suppressed, the Schleswig-Holstein revolution shared its fate. The revolt of the duchies was regarded by Conservatives generally, and by the governments of Austria and Prussia in particular, simply as an insurrection against constituted princely authority; and both Prussia and Austria

Revolt of the duchies 1848

aided in the restoration of the duchies to their lawful sovereign. The whole question of their relation to Denmark, present and future, was discussed in London in 1852, and an attempt was made to settle it by a European treaty. It was then already foreseen that the union with Denmark, established by a dynastic accident, was likely to be severed in the same way. The main line of the ruling dynasty was dying out; and the succession to the Danish throne was certain to pass, sooner or later, to the Glücksburg branch of the family. But this branch derived title through the female line, and the succession in Schleswig-Holstein was governed by the Salic law. Schleswig-Holstein accordingly would pass, not to the Glücksburg, but to the younger Augustenburg line. The London conference undertook to change all this. It decreed that Schleswig-Holstein should be permanently associated with Denmark, and that the succession, both in Denmark and in the duchies, should be vested in the Glücksburg heirs. This treaty or protocol of May 8, 1852, was signed by

London conference 1852

London protocol 1852

Prussia and Austria as European powers; but it was not ratified by the German confederation nor in any way accepted by the Schleswig-Holsteiners. And the Prussian and Austrian ambassadors signed the London protocol only after, and in consideration of, a previous treaty with Denmark, by which that kingdom bound itself to respect the autonomy of the Schleswig-Holsteiners and not to incorporate Schleswig.

Danish aggression 1863

Such was the position of affairs when King Frederick VII of Denmark issued a decree (the patent of March 30, 1863) which separated Schleswig from Holstein and practically incorporated the former in the kingdom of Denmark. The German powers at once protested; and the Federal Diet, in October, ordered an "execution" in Holstein, *i.e.*, voted to send troops there. On November 14 a new Danish parliament, representing Denmark and Schleswig, voted a new constitution incorporating Schleswig. On the following day Frederick VII died. His successor, Christian IX, signed the new constitution. Frederick's death com-

Death of the Danish king

plicated the question of the special rights of Schleswig with the broader question of the succession in both duchies. By the London protocol Christian IX became duke of Schleswig-Holstein as well as king of Denmark. But the German confederation, as we have seen, had never agreed to this, nor had the Schleswig-Holsteiners. In their opinion Christian of Glücksburg had no rights in the duchies; and when, in December, the federal execution was carried into effect by an army of 12,000 Saxons and Hanoverians, Frederick of Augustenburg was acclaimed as duke, and took up his residence at Kiel.

Dispute over the succession

To the Prussian government two courses were open. It could recognize the London protocol as still in force and insist that Christian IX, as duke of Schleswig-Holstein, should observe the treaty which guaranteed Schleswig's autonomy; or it could declare the London protocol abrogated, recognize Frederick of Augustenburg as duke and help him to gain possession of Schleswig. The

Prussia's choice of courses in 1863

public sentiment of Prussia, as of the other German states, was strongly in favor of the latter course. By adopting it Bismarck would at once have become the popular leader of a national movement, but he would have imperilled the real interests not only of Prussia but also of Germany. The revolutionary character of the popular programme and the violation of treaties which it required would have aroused the opposition of Europe. Prussia and the German patriots would have stood alone together, as in 1850; and, if successful against such odds, they would simply have added a new petty sovereignty to a Germany cursed already with over-many sovereignties. If, on the other hand, the Prussian government should accept the situation created by the treaties of 1852, it could indeed demand that Schleswig be not incorporated in Denmark, but if this point should be conceded, Prussia would be obliged to restore both duchies to their Danish ruler. This was what Austria desired and the German patriots dreaded. Bismarck, however, had satisfied himself that the party in power

The popular course

The unpopular course

at Copenhagen would accept war rather than give up the incorporation of Schleswig; and war once declared, he foresaw that the prize of victory would be whatever the victor chose to make it. The Prussian cabinet accordingly announced that it recognized the treaties of 1852 as binding, and that it demanded from Denmark nothing but the observance of those treaties — a declaration in which Austria gladly joined.

Bismarck's decision

The storm of protest which this action aroused in the Prussian Diet and throughout Germany was used by Bismarck to secure Austrian support in decisive measures against Denmark, and to avert the intervention of the other European powers. "If you do not support the moderate measures which we deem necessary," Bismarck said to Austria, — "If you oppose the just and temperate course which we are pursuing," he declared to the other powers, — "my colleagues and I will retire from the ministry. The king will then be forced to summon into power the leaders of the German revolutionary party." For fear of worse things Austria

went hand in hand with Prussia, and Europe looked on inactive. The Danes, as Bismarck expected, refused to abrogate their new constitution, and war was declared. In February, 1864, an army of 60,000 Austrians and Prussians invaded Schleswig, and on April 18 the Prussians stormed the redoubts of Düppel. A week later representatives of the European powers met in London, agreed upon an armistice and endeavored to negotiate a treaty of peace. The negotiations were fruitless. The Danes still refused to reëstablish the personal union and demanded the annexation of a portion at least of Schleswig. The war was renewed, the allies were victorious, and by the treaty of Vienna, October 30, 1864, Denmark ceded Schleswig-Holstein and the little duchy of Lauenburg to Prussia and Austria.

War with Denmark 1864

This *condominium* or joint sovereignty of Prussia and Austria in the duchies was precisely what Bismarck desired. Believing that war with Austria was necessary for the solution of the German question, it seemed

Condominium in Schleswig-Holstein 1864–66

to him convenient to have a cause of war always ready; and such a relation as that now established in the duchies would necessarily be fruitful of causes for war. Further, whenever the war should come, these duchies would be for Prussia an extremely desirable addition to the stake in play. They represented a possible gain for Prussia, but no possible gain for Austria. Their position would make their annexation to Prussia both feasible and natural, while Austria could in no case dream of annexing them. From this point of view, Bismarck's diplomacy was especially skilful, and the association of Austria in the enterprise was its most masterly feature. Bismarck himself declared, after the French war, that the Schleswig-Holstein campaign was the one of which, from a political point of view, he was proudest.

How Austria's play was forced

It has often been asked, in the light of subsequent events, why Austria joined forces with Prussia. It is difficult to see how Austria could have acted otherwise. If Bismarck had repudiated the London treaties, then indeed Austria's course would have been

clear. It could have put itself at the head of a European concert for the restraint and punishment of the Prussian law-breakers. Bismarck, however, assumed an attitude of unimpeachable legality, which was also in consonance with the Austro-Prussian policy of 1850; and Austria was compelled either to act with Prussia or not to act at all. Austrian neutrality, however, would have left Prussia in complete control of the field. Prussia would have made war alone; would have annexed the duchies at its close; would have gained greatly in power and enormously in prestige. This Austria could not tolerate; and unless it were prepared, as Bismarck had already suggested, to "transfer its centre of gravity to Ofen," it had to go with Prussia in order to see that Prussia did not go too far. It cannot be maintained that Austria was duped; for when, at an early stage of the joint action, the Austrian cabinet attempted to stipulate that the duchies should be restored to Denmark unless both powers agreed upon some other disposition, Bismarck refused his assent and substituted a stipu-

lation, which the Austrian ministry accepted, that the eventual disposition of the duchies should be determined by agreement between the two contracting powers.

Strained relations with Austria

The joint ownership of the duchies speedily led, as Bismarck had anticipated, to dissension. Austria was willing to turn them over to Prussia in return for compensation in Silesia. King William, however, refused to cede any portion of Silesia. Austria then espoused the cause of the Augustenburg prince. Prussia protested, and war seemed imminent in 1865. It was postponed, not so much by Bismarck's will as by the king's, and a temporary adjustment was reached in the convention of Gastein. By this treaty Prussia bought out Austria's rights in Lauenburg, and the administration of government in the two other duchies was divided, Prussia assuming control of Schleswig and Austria of Holstein. But the truce was a short one. Prussia accused Austria of encouraging the Augustenburg agitation, and when, on June 1, 1866, Austria submitted the Schleswig-

Convention of Gastein 1865

New dissensions

Holstein question to the Federal Diet, Prussia declared the treaty of Gastein broken and the joint administration of the duchies re-established. Prussian troops were accordingly sent into Holstein. Austria pronounced this a breach of the peace; and on June 11 the Austrian representative in the Federal Diet proposed the mobilization against Prussia of the contingents of all the other German states. This motion was carried, June 14, by a three-fifths vote. The Prussian representative declared, in the name of his government, that this attempt to levy federal war upon a member of the confederation was a breach of the fundamental pact of union, and that the confederation was thereby dissolved. He added that it was the purpose of his government to find for the unity of the German people a form better suited to the conditions of the age.

The German question

For nearly three months, in accordance with a plan foreshadowed in his earlier letters, Bismarck had been pushing the German question to the front. He had been agitating, by circulars to all the German

governments, the question of federal reform, and on April 9 he had caused a proposal to be introduced in the Federal Diet for the establishment of a German parliament on the basis of manhood suffrage. Immediately after the vote of June 14, Prussia called upon the governments of Saxony, Hanover and Hesse-Cassel to join in the establishment of a new federal union. Upon their refusal Prussian troops invaded these territories, and the war for the control of Germany began on June 16, 1866.

The war with Austria 1866

Neither Austria nor Prussia stood alone. Austria was supported by all the South German states, *viz.*, Bavaria, Württemberg, Baden and Hesse-Darmstadt, and by the more important states of North Germany, *viz.*, Hanover, Saxony, Hesse-Cassel and Nassau. Prussia had secured the alliance of Italy by a secret treaty (April 8). In case of victory Italy was to receive Venice. The war was practically terminated by the great Prussian victory of Königgrätz or Sadowa, July 3. After Sadowa, Prussia was in a position to dictate the terms of peace.

Sadowa

The military men wished to enter Vienna and to demand a strip of Bohemian territory. Bismarck feared a joint intervention of the neutral powers and desired a speedy settlement. He also urged the impolicy of inflicting lasting wounds upon Austria's national pride; and after a hard struggle he carried his point. Preliminaries of peace were signed at Nicolsburg, July 26, and the final treaty at Prague, August 23. Italy received Venice; Austria conveyed to Prussia its interests in Schleswig-Holstein and recognized the dissolution of the old German confederation and the creation of a new North German confederation, to be composed of the states north of the Main. North of the Main, also, Prussia was to annex such territories as it saw fit, promising to spare Saxony. The South German states were to be permitted to form an independent confederation of their own. Austria was for ever excluded from Germany.

Peace of Prague

To these arrangements Napoleon III was in fact though not ostensibly a party. It was French influence, backed by the prospect

Napoleon's interference

of French intervention, that secured the recognition of South German independence. In consideration of the abandonment — or rather postponement — of Prussian hegemony over South Germany, Napoleon assented to more extensive Prussian annexations in North Germany than were at first proposed.

Prussian annexations

Prussia annexed Schleswig-Holstein, Hanover, Hesse-Cassel, Nassau and the free city of Frankfort, adding four and a half millions to its population and increasing its territory by a fourth. The annexation of Hanover was especially advantageous; it rounded out what Motley had described as "Prussia's wasp-waist."

The North German confederation

All the rest of the German states north of the Main, including the kingdom of Saxony, ten duchies, seven principalities, and the free cities of Hamburg, Lübeck and Bremen, joined with Prussia in the formation of a new federal union — the North German confederation. Its constitution was draughted by Bismarck, accepted by the governments of the single

states, and submitted in 1867 to an Imperial Diet chosen by manhood suffrage. After this Diet had passed it with a number of amendments, it was ratified without further amendment by the legislatures of the single states. Under its provisions the executive powers of the union were vested in a president (the king of Prussia) and a Federal Council consisting of appointed representatives of the different states. In this council Prussia was to have seventeen votes, Saxony four, the larger duchies and principalities each three or two, and the smaller principalities and the free cities each one. The presidency of the council was entrusted to a chancellor, appointed by the federal president. (Bismarck, of course, became chancellor.) The legislative power was vested in the Federal Council and an Imperial Diet elected by manhood suffrage. In name federal, the new union was essentially national. Its power extended over military and naval matters; over commerce, railways, telegraphs and the post; over the entire field of judicial organization,

Character of the new union

criminal law and procedure, civil procedure and commercial law. The change from the old confederation (1815–1866) to this new union was greater than the change from the American articles of confederation to the American constitution of 1789.

Bismarck's unpopularity, 1862–66

In the light of these brilliant achievements, the public judgment of Bismarck underwent an immediate and complete reversal. A few of his opponents had been converted to his support by the outcome of the Danish campaign, but until the autumn of 1866 he was generally regarded as a reactionary, pure and simple. His conflict with the Prussian Chamber of Deputies had naturally intensified this impression. In his support of the army reform, in his hostility to the insurgent Poles, in his treatment of the Schleswig-Holstein question, he had defiantly antagonized German public opinion; and when it became evident that his conduct of Prussian policy was certain to produce a "fratricidal" war with Austria, he was the most widely hated man in Germany. On

May 7, 1866, he narrowly escaped death at the hands of a fanatic named Cohen. The assassin killed himself in prison. Crowds of people visited the cell, and women covered Cohen's body with flowers and crowns of laurel.

Attempt on his life

The revulsion of feeling which followed the Austrian war, and the sudden popularity of its author, were not due solely, nor even chiefly, to the vulgar admiration of success. Bismarck had gratified the deepest desires of the German people. He had made Germany a nation, and he had given it a constitution that seemed modern and liberal. He also made peace with the Prussian Chamber of Deputies. To the dismay of his Tory supporters, and not without a struggle with his royal master, he asked and received indemnity for governing without a budget, recognizing the rights of the Chamber and the abnormal character of his own administration during the period of conflict. The natural result was a complete disorganization of the parliamentary opposition and a general shifting of party lines. The best

Reversal of sentiment

Bill of indemnity

Shifting of party lines

elements of the opposition, the Old Liberals of 1848, formed a new National Liberal group, which during the next ten years generally acted in concert with the government and, with the Conservatives, gave it a working majority both in the Prussian Diet and in the Imperial Parliament.

Strained relations with France

This simplified the internal politics of Prussia and of the confederation; but the foreign relations of the new union were far from satisfactory. Napoleon, as we have seen, had thus far shown himself friendly to Prussia. He had intimated, in 1865, his willingness to conclude an offensive alliance against Austria (Prussia to reorganize Germany, and France to receive payment on the left bank of the Rhine); and in spite of the rejection of this offer he had actively furthered the conclusion of the alliance between Prussia and Italy. He did not believe that Prussia was a match for Austria; he believed that his aid would still be needed, and that he would ultimately get his price. Sadowa defeated these schemes;

and after Sadowa he should have seen that nothing was to be gained by negotiation. He could not or would not see this and at once began to demand compensation for his neutrality. At Nicolsburg, in July, 1866, his ambassador, M. Benedetti, demanded a rectification of France's eastern frontier. On August 5 the French demands were put into definite form. Prussia was to grant France the frontier of 1814, and was to obtain from Bavaria and from Hesse-Darmstadt the cession of their provinces on the left bank of the Rhine. Luxemburg was to be separated from Germany and the Prussian garrison was to be withdrawn from the fortress.[1] Bismarck promptly declared that

Compensations demanded

[1] Luxemburg belonged, at this time, to the king of the Netherlands. It had formed part of the old German confederation. The fortress of Luxemburg was a federal fortress, and the Prussian garrison was stationed there in accordance with federal treaty. With the dissolution of the old confederation, Luxemburg was already practically separated from Germany, and the reason for keeping a Prussian garrison in the fortress had disappeared. Napoleon desired that Prussia should recognize these facts and inferences, in order that the way might be clear for his acquiring Luxemburg from the king of the Netherlands.

the cession of German territory could not be considered. On August 20 Benedetti declared that France would be satisfied with Saarlouis, Landau and Luxemburg. At the same time, however, another and broader arrangement was discussed. It was suggested — according to each of the negotiators by the other — that Prussia should help France to acquire Belgium and that France should help Prussia to bring South Germany into the German confederation. On August 29, Benedetti put this suggestion into the form of a draught treaty in his own handwriting. It has never been shown that Bismarck agreed to any of these demands; Benedetti got nothing from him in writing; but it is inconceivable that the French ambassador should have gone so far without considerable encouragement. Bismarck, as he himself put it, pursued a "dilatory" policy. He wished to postpone war with France until the Prussian military system was introduced in the annexed provinces and in the other German states; and he desired written proof of the French demands. This, as we have

Evidence of French demands secured

Use made of the evidence

seen, he obtained; and of the evidence thus obtained he made effective use. During the peace negotiations between Prussia and Bavaria in August, 1866, Bavaria appealed to Napoleon for his good offices, which Napoleon at once promised. Bismarck met this move by exhibiting to the Bavarian minister the draught treaty of August 5, showing him that his friend, the emperor of the French, had asked Prussia for large portions of Bavarian and Hessian territory. The result of this revelation was the immediate conclusion, not merely of a treaty of peace, but also of a secret treaty of offensive and defensive alliance between Prussia and Bavaria (August 22). Similar treaties had already been concluded with Württemberg and Baden. Equally effective use was made of the draught treaty concerning Belgium. It was published in the London *Times* of July 25, 1870, a few days after the French declaration of war. The effect of this disclosure upon the public opinion of England and of Europe was all that Bismarck could desire.

Genesis of the Franco-German war

The prime cause of the Franco-German war was French irritation and alarm at the growth of a first-class power across the Rhine. A long step had been taken in 1866 towards German unity, and the completion of this movement, it was felt, would destroy the traditional primacy of France in Europe and menace its safety. A secondary cause was the failure of the French government to obtain territorial compensation for the increased power of Prussia. After the unsuccessful negotiations described above, Napoleon attempted in 1867 to carry out a part at least of his programme by purchasing Luxemburg from the king of the Netherlands. This attempt created great indignation among the people of Germany; and the military party at Berlin, believing that a contest with France was inevitable, wished to precipitate the war before the French army reforms, then under discussion, were completed. Bismarck, however, declared that "the personal conviction of a ruler or statesman, however well founded, that war will eventually break out, cannot justify its promotion." He

Luxemburg incident 1867

contrived to defeat the purchase of Luxemburg without giving the French government any tangible grievance against Prussia. But Napoleon felt that he had again been duped, and the incident increased the tension between the two nations. A large body of Napoleon's warmest supporters began to agitate for war against Prussia as the only means of rehabilitating the prestige of the dynasty. Negotiations were opened by Napoleon with the emperor of Austria and the king of Italy for joint action against Prussia; and although, because of the failure of the three courts to reach any satisfactory agreement on the Roman question, no formal treaty was signed, an understanding was attained early in June, 1870, that if France declared war upon Prussia and succeeded in occupying South Germany, then Austria and Italy, having gained time for mobilization by a temporary neutrality, would also declare war and add their forces to those of France. War, it appears, was not contemplated before 1871, for the Austrian military authorities stipulated that the declaration of war by

Coalition against Germany

France should be made not later than in April.

The Spanish candidacy

The immediate occasion of the war was the Spanish candidacy of Prince Leopold of Hohenzollern. This prince, although a Hohenzollern, was not a member of the Prussian royal house but of the South German and Catholic house of Hohenzollern-Sigmaringen. He was more closely connected with the imperial family of France than with the royal family of Prussia. By family compact, however, the king of Prussia was recognized as the head of the house. The Spanish ministry, in search of a Catholic king, had repeatedly offered to present Leopold's name to the Cortes — twice in 1869 and again in March, 1870 — but the offer had been declined. King William advised against the acceptance of the candidacy, and in 1869 Bismarck was of the same mind. In 1870, however, Bismarck advised acceptance. His change of opinion, he said, was due to the fact that the Spanish revolutionary government, unstable in 1869, had obtained in 1870 the complete control of the country. When

Bismarck's part in the affair

the third offer had been declined, Bismarck secured, through Prussian agents, a fourth offer; and in June, 1870, largely in consequence of his advice, Leopold consented to become a candidate. King William was informed of the prince's decision and declared that he could interpose no objection.

Of these negotiations Napoleon had early information. Personally he might well have preferred Leopold to the Orleanist duke of Montpensier, who was at the time the only other prominent candidate; but he had told Benedetti that, while the Orleanist candidacy was anti-dynastic, the Hohenzollern candidacy was anti-national and could not be tolerated. In an ensuing interview with Bismarck, Benedetti was informed that King William disapproved Leopold's candidacy and that the Spanish offer had been declined. This, at the time, was true. In view of these statements, Benedetti deemed it unwise to insist upon the resentment which Leopold's election would arouse in France.

Bismarck's motives

Such a warning was unnecessary. Given the strength of the war parties both in France

and in Prussia, and the general conviction on both sides of the Rhine that, sooner or later, war was bound to come, it was obvious that the Hohenzollern candidacy was well adapted to precipitate hostilities. Bismarck had, in fact, as he stated twenty-three years later, made up his mind that war with France was necessary for the completion of German unity and was therefore to be promoted. If we assume that he was aware — and, considering the efficiency of the German intelligence service, it is highly improbable that he was unaware — of the arrangements that were making for an attack on Germany in 1871, we can see why he should desire to provoke a French declaration of war before those arrangements were perfected.

French protests, it was planned, should be met with the statement that Leopold's candidacy in no wise concerned the Prussian state, and that it concerned King William not as ruler of Prussia but only as titular head of the Sigmaringen branch of the family. The only parties concerned were Prince Leopold and the people of Spain. So presented, the

issue would require careful handling by the French government. It would be easy to blunder, and Bismarck had little respect for Napoleon's capacity and still less for that of de Gramont, the new French minister of foreign affairs. He had long before described Napoleon as "*une grande incapacité méconnue*," and he had declared that Gramont was the greatest blockhead (*Dummkopf*) in Europe.

The final negotiations with the Spanish government in the spring of 1870 and Leopold's acceptance of candidacy seem to have been kept secret. It was planned that the French should be confronted, if possible, with the accomplished fact of Leopold's election by the Spanish Cortes. In such event, French opposition to the choice of the Spanish people could be represented as an attack upon their independence, and it was hoped that it would be so regarded, and therefore resented, in Spain.

French anger and German resentment

This plan failed. Early in July Paris learned from Madrid that the Spanish government was about to present Leopold's can-

didacy to the Cortes. Great indignation was manifested in the French journals and by the French government. Gramont declared the candidacy an attempt "to re-establish the empire of Charles V." In the German press these utterances were met with expressions of surprise and of apprehension. Evidence that the Prussian government saw in the candidacy no menace to peace was found in the fact that official Berlin was taking its usual summer vacation. King William was drinking the waters at Ems and Bismarck was rusticating at Varzin. It seemed clear that France was seeking a quarrel.

French demands

A French protest sent to Berlin elicited from an under-secretary in the Foreign Office the information that Prussia had nothing to do with the candidacy. Benedetti was then instructed to proceed to Ems and to endeavor to secure the withdrawal of the candidacy by direct negotiation with King William. He was to refuse to accept the theory that the king of Prussia and the head of the Hohenzollern family were two distinct

persons. In later telegrams he was informed that France would not be satisfied with the withdrawal of the candidacy unless the king were in some manner "associated" with the withdrawal, if only by announcing it to the French ambassador.

King William maintained that he had no authority over Prince Leopold. He had not advised the prince to accept the candidacy, and he would not advise a withdrawal of the acceptance. He stated, however, that if the prince saw fit to withdraw he would approve the withdrawal, and would notify Benedetti. The prince, too, was taking a holiday and was out of reach of telegrams; but on July 12 it was announced that his candidacy had been withdrawn by his father. On July 13 King William communicated this information to the French ambassador. To the latter this seemed a satisfactory conclusion of the controversy. Not only was the candidacy withdrawn, but he had succeeded in associating the king with the withdrawal. Throughout Europe also it was felt that the French government had carried its

Leopold's withdrawal

point and that there would be no war. Napoleon and his prime minister, Olliveir, expressed themselves in this sense. But Gramont, supported in this by the general feeling of Paris and of the Deputies, declared that the satisfaction obtained by France was inadequate. The king of Prussia had not been sufficiently associated with the withdrawal of the candidacy, since the news had come to France and to Europe not through him but twenty-four hours earlier from Madrid. Gramont accordingly suggested to Werther, the Prussian ambassador, that King William should write an explanatory letter to the emperor; and, with Napoleon's assent, he instructed Benedetti to obtain from the king an assurance that the candidacy would not be renewed. On the morning of July 13 the king was asked to give such a pledge. This he refused to do. He told Benedetti that this demand indicated to him a determination on the part of the French government to force a war. A subsequent request on the part of the ambassador for another interview was refused.

New French demands

France disposed to retreat

In the French cabinet, on the evening of the 13th, it was not felt that the king's attitude made war necessary. Energetic remonstrances from the representatives of friendly powers had convinced Napoleon and his ministers that they had gone too far, and their feeling was in favor of accepting the situation. On the 14th, however, in consequence of action taken by Bismarck the day before, they decided upon war; and on the 15th war was declared.

Bismarck intervenes

From Varzin Bismarck had followed the negotiations at Ems with growing dissatisfaction. King William, in his judgment, had been too conciliatory. He telegraphed the king that he deemed it advisable to come to Ems. Reaching Berlin on the 12th, he learned that the candidacy had been withdrawn. He felt that Prussia had sustained a diplomatic defeat. On the 13th, as soon as he heard of the new French demands, he grasped the opportunity to keep the controversy open. Taking for the first time an overt part in the affair, he explained to the English ambassador that France was ob-

viously determined on war, and that it was now Prussia's turn to demand explanations and assurances. He notified Werther that his conduct in entertaining the demand for "a letter of apology" was disapproved, and directed him to take leave of absence on account of ill health. On the evening of the same day he received a telegraphic account of the occurrences of the morning at Ems, closing with the suggestion, on the part of the king, that this latest French demand and its refusal be made public. This suggestion Bismarck carried out in the most literal fashion, omitting all details. The account thus given to the public created the impression that the negotiations at Ems had terminated more abruptly than was really the case. The Germans thought that King William had been insulted — which was true, as regarded the substance of the French demand, but untrue as regarded the form of its presentation — and the smouldering indignation that had been kindled by the arrogant tone of French orators and of the French press burst into a flame of wrath.

"Editing" the Ems despatch

Effect of Bismarck's action

The Parisians thought that their ambassador had been insulted, and demanded an immediate declaration of war. Napoleon and his ministers knew that Benedetti's dismissal had been courteous; but they saw that peace could be preserved only by an obvious and unmistakable retreat, on their part, from the ill-considered position which they had taken on July 12. Bismarck had so utilized their mistake as to hold them to its consequences.[1]

French expectations

The way in which the French ministers handled the Hohenzollern candidacy shows that they regarded it, at the outset, as a favorable issue on which to force a war. If France should declare war on a distinctly German question, all Germany, they foresaw,

[1] For the different versions of the story of the editing of the Ems despatch (first published in 1892) see *Out of Their Own Mouths*, edited by Munroe Smith (Appletons, 1917), pp. 8–14. In his memoirs Bismarck says that he expected his condensed despatch to have "the effect of a red rag on the Gallic bull." Thiers divined this purpose and warned his fellow deputies that they were about to make war "on a point of sensitiveness."

would side with Prussia, and it would be difficult for Austria to intervene. By selecting a question which concerned only the Hohenzollerns they hoped to secure the neutrality of the South German states and the active assistance of Austria. When, after being deprived of their original grievance, they nevertheless declared war, they undoubtedly hoped that the French troops would secure, without serious opposition, the control of South Germany before the North German mobilization was completed, and that Austria and Italy, in spite of the lateness of the season, would come to their aid.

Attitude of South Germany

These hopes proved futile. In South Germany, as in the north, the war was regarded as an attack on German independence, and the South German states at once placed their armies at the disposal of the king of Prussia. The North German troops were concentrated on the Alsacian frontier with unexpected rapidity, while the French mobilization proved far slower than was anticipated. From the start France was thrown on the defensive. Partly for this reason,

partly because held in check by Russia, Austria remained neutral. The king of Italy, in spite of the dissent of his ministers, desired to come to Napoleon's aid; but the success of the Prussian arms was too rapid and complete to encourage interference. Seven weeks after the declaration of war the entire force with which Napoleon had taken the field was destroyed, captured or besieged. After Sedan the issue of the struggle was certain; but the heroic patriotism of the French people prolonged the war for six months. Preliminaries of peace were signed at Versailles, February 26, and the final treaty at Frankfort, May 10, 1871. France ceded to Germany Alsace, including Strasbourg, and part of Lorraine, including Metz — altogether about 1,500,000 souls — and agreed to pay a war indemnity of 5,000,000,000 francs.

German victories

Peace of Frankfort

The most important result of this war was the completion of German unity. In South Germany local patriotism and religious prejudice had heretofore stood in

The German empire

the way of union with Prussia. These obstacles were swept away in the enthusiasm of this national war. In the march from the Rhine to the Seine, Bavarians, Württembergers, Hessians and Prussians felt themselves, as never before, one great people. The diplomatists had only to put the stamp of law upon the accomplished fact. In November, treaties of union were concluded between the North German confederation and the South German states; and on January 18, in the hall of mirrors in Versailles, King William was proclaimed German emperor. The prophecy of Frederick William IV had come true — that the imperial crown would be won on the field of battle.

The new empire, with its twenty-five states and its one territory (Alsace-Lorraine), embraced, at its establishment, over 40,000,000 people, a number which rose in the three following decades, by natural increase and in spite of emigration, to more than 55,000,000.

The imperial constitution

The imperial constitution was simply a revised edition of the North German con-

stitution of 1867. The position of the South German states, barring a few reserved rights, was identical with that of the North German states. Their governments were represented in the Federal Council and their people in the Imperial Diet. In the new empire, however, as in the North German confederation, the equality of the federated states was formal, not material. When, as Treitschke reports, the Emperor William I said: "The empire is nothing but an expanded Prussia," he told the truth. As king of Prussia, he ruled nearly two-thirds of the territory and three-fifths of the people of Germany. As emperor, he controlled Germany's foreign policy and could declare defensive war. Declaration of offensive war required the assent of the Federal Council.[1] In the Council was lodged also the organization and control of internal administration, in matters in which the empire was competent. In this body Prussia had only about

Germany "an expanded Prussia"

[1] Whether a war is offensive or defensive is usually a debatable matter. In any case the control of diplomatic negotiations involves power to make war inevitable.

three-tenths of the total vote. The Prussian vote, however, was large enough to prevent amendment of the constitution. Moreover, the political influence of Prussia in the Council was in no wise measured by its voting power. The chairman and chief executive officer of the Council, the imperial chancellor, and all heads of departments were appointed by the emperor. The offices of imperial chancellor and of Prussian premier were normally held by the same person. With the allied princes, finally, the political influence of the king of Prussia was far greater than his constitutional authority as emperor. In Prussia he was actually as well as legally supreme; and to him the German princes looked, as in earlier periods they had looked to the Austrian or to the Russian emperor, for the maintenance of monarchic institutions. During the subsequent history of the German empire, measures supported by Prussia seldom failed to secure the necessary majority in the Federal Council.

In the Imperial Diet, elected by the Ger-

The German parliament

man people, were vested important powers. Its coöperation was necessary for legislation, and legislation was required for the imposition of taxes, the authorization of expenditures and the organization of the military forces of the empire. The Imperial Diet, however, like the Prussian Diet, had no effective control of governmental policy or of administration. The chancellor and the departmental secretaries were declared to be responsible, but they were not responsible to the representatives of the German people. In his resistance to all demands that they be held responsible to the parliament Bismarck was supported by the German princes. He wrote to Prince William, in January, 1888:

> Within the last seventeen years we should have fallen under parliamentary rule if the princes had not stood firmly by the empire; . . . and in future, when the nimbus of 1870 has grown pale, the security of the empire and of its monarchic institutions will lie to an even greater extent in the unity of the princes.

In the development which Bismarck gave to the powers of the German emperor, as

Bismarck's theory of monarchic government

in his persistent defence of the prerogatives of the Prussian crown, it was his assumption that the imperial and royal powers were not to be exercised directly by the monarch, but through ministers possessing sufficient independence to oppose his views and to resign their offices if their advice was rejected. This was the theory on which William I had acted as king of Prussia and on which he acted as German emperor. Bismarck of course recognized that there was nothing to prevent a king of Prussia from acting as his own premier, or a German emperor from acting as his own chancellor; but, as he said in his memoirs, this would rob the monarch of the protection derived from ministerial responsibility: the monarch would become himself responsible.

Internal politics 1871–90

In matters within the competence of the Imperial or of the Prussian Diet the representatives of the people not infrequently asserted an independent will, and the internal politics of the empire were full of conflict; but neither as Prussian premier nor

as imperial chancellor did Bismarck encounter, after 1866, any such obstinate resistance to his proposals as he had met earlier in the Prussian Diet. Since 1866, and to a more marked degree since 1870, the feelings and views of the German people had been sensibly modified. Revolution and a representative parliament had failed to secure German unity. This deepest desire of the Germans had been realized by monarchic authority and military force. Among the older Germans, faith in popular government had been weakened by the fiasco of 1848–49; the younger generation, at least in the upper and middle classes, was overwhelmingly monarchist and increasingly militarist. Under these changed conditions every internal conflict was fought out within the lines of the constitution and was settled either by compromise or by dissolution of parliament and appeal to the electorate.

The Centrists

The most powerful and the most troublesome element of opposition was the Ultramontane or Centre party, which had

sixty-three votes in the first parliament of the empire (1871–74), and after 1874 regularly numbered about one hundred — a little more than a fourth of the entire membership. It was ostensibly established to defend the liberties of the Roman Catholic church in Germany; but it was established at a time when no measure menacing those liberties had been passed or even proposed. It represented, primarily, the hostility of the Roman curia to the establishment in central Europe of a powerful empire with a Protestant head; but it represented also the loyalty to the old order that survived in German territories, formerly independent states, now Prussian provinces; and it was strengthened by the support of the alien populations brought under German rule by old and new annexations. Its leader, Windthorst, was formerly a minister of the king of Hanover; and the malcontent "Guelfs" and other German "particularists," and the deputies elected in Polish districts, in northern Schleswig and in Alsace-Lorraine, were, if not members of the party, at least its allies.

The outspoken disloyalty of some of the members of this party and the systematic agitation of the Jesuits and of a portion of the Roman Catholic clergy induced the imperial and state governments, first, to adopt repressive measures, and finally to attempt by law a more exact definition of the limits of religious liberty. Thus arose the so-called "culture conflict." Bismarck always objected to this phrase, insisting on the essentially political character of the struggle and declaring that, as minister-president and chancellor, he was fighting, not for culture, but for the political interests of the Prussian state and the German empire. In the main the conflict was fought out in Prussia and the other single states, religious affairs not falling within the imperial jurisdiction. The resistance of the Catholic clergy to the new laws—particularly to the Prussian "May laws" of 1873 — was very bitter and obstinate. In Prussia nearly all the Catholic bishops were imprisoned or expelled; and an alarming number of parishes were deprived of all spiritual care.

"Culture conflict"

The May laws, 1873

The Prussian government soon found itself obliged to ask the Diet for large powers of indulgence and dispensation: in other words, for power to execute the laws or leave them unexecuted at its discretion. The death of Pius IX, January 7, 1878, and the election of a less combative and more politic successor, Leo XIII, facilitated the attainment of a *modus vivendi;* and the disruption of the National Liberal party in 1879 and the resultant disappearance of the governmental majority caused Bismarck to desire a truce. He needed Centrist support; and he secured it on the *do ut des* plan, sacrificing the anti-clerical legislation bit by bit in return for votes for governmental measures. A peace — or rather an indefinite truce — was concluded with the Roman curia in 1887. Prussia had already "revised" the greater portion of its church laws out of existence, and the pope agreed that the government should be notified of all intended appointments to ecclesiastical offices. But, notwithstanding this arrangement, the Centre maintained its organization and its attitude of

Close of the conflict 1887

general opposition, and Bismarck continued to traffic with its leaders whenever its support was necessary. At the time of his dismissal the governmental reserve of possible concessions was not yet exhausted; there was still enough anti-clerical legislation on the statute-books to carry his successor through one rather difficult legislative period.

The uses of adversity

During this struggle with the church, Bismarck a second time narrowly escaped assassination. On July 13, 1874, while driving in an open carriage, he was shot at by a cooper named Kullmann. At the moment the shot was fired, Bismarck had touched his hat in answer to the salutation of an acquaintance, and the bullet passed between his temple and his wrist. Kullmann assigned the wrongs of the church as the reason for his act.

Second attempt on Bismarck's life, 1874

Less powerful in parliament, but more dangerous to the social and political order of the German empire, was the Social Democratic party. The great strength of this party in Germany — in the election of 1890

The Social Democrats

it cast nearly eleven per cent of the total vote, and in 1898 nearly twenty-eight per cent — was partly due to the influence which speculative theories exercise upon the German mind, but mainly to the sudden passage of the German people from a system of economic restraint to an almost complete economic liberty. This change was accomplished by a series of liberal laws enacted by the North German and Imperial Diets, abolishing nearly all restrictions upon trade and industry and giving the laborer full freedom, but exposing him also to the unchecked influence of free competition. All such transitions are of course accompanied by much suffering and discontent; and the discontent of the German workingmen found expression in the Social Democratic movement. The rapid growth of the party, and the increasingly revolutionary tendency shown in the speeches and writings of its leaders, had already caused the imperial and state governments to consider the desirability of repressive legislation, when, on May 11, 1878, a workingman named Hödel, who was

shown to be connected with the Social Democrats, attempted the life of the emperor. Bismarck at once introduced in the Imperial Diet an anti-socialist bill of great severity, intended to suppress entirely the spread of Social Democratic doctrines. To the majority of the Deputies the bill seemed too seriously to restrict the freedom of assembly and of the press, and its passage in the form desired by the government was refused. On June 2, a second attempt was made upon the emperor's life by a man of university education, Dr. Nobiling. The emperor was seriously injured, and for a time his life was thought to be in danger. Bismarck promptly dissolved the parliament and ordered new elections. The electors supported the government, and the new parliament passed the desired measures against the socialists. The law was passed for a term of years only, but was repeatedly reënacted and remained in force until 1890. Bismarck, however, was not satisfied with repressive measures. He believed it necessary to strike at the root of the trouble, not, as many Conservatives

Repressive legislation

Reform legislation

desired, by abandoning the principles of economic liberty, but by bettering the position of the workingmen. In accordance with this desire, and largely through his influence, rigid employers' liability laws were adopted, and also a remarkable series of statutes organizing a system of compulsory insurance of laborers against accident, disease and old age.

The German army

During these years of conflict with the Ultramontanes and with the Social Democrats, Bismarck was occupied with questions even more vital to the new empire — questions that touched the central points of political power, the army and the treasury. It was the Prussian army that had made Germany a nation, and the maintenance of the German empire was felt to depend upon the strength and efficiency of its military forces. The constitution of the empire provided that every adult German should be held to military service, but left the details of army organization to be regulated by law. The Conservatives desired that this should

be done by an ordinary law, not limited as to duration; while the Radicals were disposed to demand an annual regulation. As against the Radical demand, the military authorities insisted that so complex a machine as the German army could not be run from year to year with annual risk of parliamentary interference. Bismarck himself did not desire a permanent law, because such a law, he thought, would make any future increase of the army difficult. His attitude facilitated a compromise, *viz.*, the periodical passage of laws fixing the strength of the peace footing for a term of years. From the outset, the term selected was seven years; and at the close of each septennate the strength of the army was increased. In 1887 the Diet attempted to shorten the period to three years. Bismarck declared this an attempt to make the federal army "a parliamentary army," dissolved the Diet, January 14, 1887, and appealed to the country. The country supported the government, returning a Diet in which the Radical group lost two-thirds of its strength; and the new parliament

The septennate

voted a new septennate with a peace footing of nearly half a million. In 1888 it extended the time of service in the *Landwehr*, increasing the fighting strength of the army by 700,000 men and enabling Germany, as Bismarck said in a notable speech, to put a million men on each frontier — the western and the eastern.

German finances

During the first years of the new empire the imperial treasury derived its income largely from contributions levied upon the single states. The constitution assigned to the empire all customs duties, but under the existing tariff these duties were quite insufficient to balance the imperial budget. The constitution also gave the empire wide powers of indirect taxation, and Bismarck resolved to utilize this source of supply. For such taxation, the most available objects were spirits and tobacco. An excise upon spirits would have encountered the opposition of the Conservative landholders, who were large producers of brandy; and no measure of financial reform could be

carried without the aid of the Conservatives. Bismarck accordingly turned to tobacco, and demanded either a monopoly or a heavy taxation of the manufacture. The monopoly was his choice. He claimed that the tobacco monopoly would not merely place the empire in a position of financial independence, but would also yield a surplus to be divided among the single states. The states would thus be enabled to reduce their direct taxes. This project, however, found no favor in the eyes of the German Liberals. The manufacture of tobacco was one of the most prosperous of Germany's industries, and one of the least concentrated. It was carried on in thousands of little factories, and often as a house industry. Accordingly, the National Liberals, who represented especially the middle class, opposed the monopoly. For a time the leaders of this party seemed inclined to support some scheme for taxing the manufacture of tobacco; but the opposition of their constituents ultimately forced them into opposition on this point also. Without the support

Project of a tobacco monopoly

Defeat of the project

of the National Liberals the proposed taxes could not be carried; for the Conservative and National Liberal parties constituted the majority upon which the government had thus far depended. No feasible way of increasing the imperial receipts was now left except an increase of the customs duties. This involved the abandonment of the policy which the German customs union had pursued from the outset, and to which the empire had thus far remained constant. But Germany was ready for a change. The theory of free trade had been strongly assailed. Numerous industries were clamoring for protection, and to secure a protective tariff it was necessary only to bring a sufficient number of industrial interests into combination. Such a tariff was passed July 12, 1879, by a combination of the land and the iron interests. The duties imposed on breadstuffs and cattle held the Conservatives firm in their allegiance to the government, and the duties on iron won the support of the Ultramontanes, this party being strongly recruited from the mining and manufactur-

A protective tariff, 1879

ing districts on the Rhine. The National Liberal party was disrupted. Incidentally, it is almost needless to say, this tariff greatly increased the revenue of the empire; and after its adoption it was found to be possible to balance the imperial budget without collecting contributions from the states. Subsequently the financial independence of the empire was further assured by a tax upon spirits, voted by the strongly governmental Diet of 1887.

During the debates upon the tariff of 1879 Bismarck urged that the protection of German industries would increase not only the wealth of Germany but its population also, and thus doubly strengthen the country. Emigration, he argued, was due to lack of employment, and the growth of manufactures would increase the demand for labor and enable more Germans to live in Germany. These results, however, could not be attained solely by the imposition of protective duties. The output of the German factories could not permanently be in-

creased without an increase of the foreign demand. New channels must be opened to German trade and new markets conquered for German industry. Much had been done already by the private enterprise of German merchants; much more could be done if their efforts were seconded by the diplomacy and supported by the power of the imperial government. Acquisition of colonies became a widespread demand, and as early as 1883 a "colonial group" appeared in the Imperial Diet. With this demand Bismarck at first showed little sympathy. He feared that a colonial policy would bring Germany into conflict with other European powers, especially with Great Britain. The arguments in favor of such a policy, however, were not easy to meet, and the demand became too general and too strong to be longer resisted. Having decided to gratify it, Bismarck acted with energy and with foresight. The first step in the development of his colonial plans was the sudden seizure in 1884 of a number of points upon the coasts of Africa and the islands of the Pacific ocean.

Colonial policy

The second step was to break down the exorbitant African claims of Portugal, and to open the Congo to the commerce of the world. This was done at the Berlin conference of 1884–85. A further measure contemplated by the chancellor was the creation by imperial subsidies of German steamship lines which should give the German manufacturers and merchants rapid and direct communication with the principal ports of Africa, Australia and Asia. This scheme aroused strong opposition in the German parliament, and Bismarck, after repeatedly renewing his demands, obtained only a portion of the desired subsidies.

The Berlin conference 1884–85

Bismarck's colonial policy was strictly limited to the promotion of German trade. He desired colonies of exploitation only, not colonies of settlement. With the demand that "new homes beyond the sea" should be provided for German emigrants he had no sympathy; to encourage emigration was to weaken Germany. He held that the flag should follow trade, not precede it; and that, in its colonial ventures, Germany

should look for "sure advantages without disproportionately great risks, especially without conflict with older and stronger sea powers."

A dispute regarding Spanish and German rights in the Caroline islands was adroitly utilized, in 1885, to promote better relations with the Vatican and to conciliate the Catholics in Germany. At Bismarck's suggestion, the controversy was submitted to the arbitral decision of Pope Leo XIII.

General results

If we consider simply the extent to which Bismarck's immediate objects were attained, his conduct of the internal affairs of the empire seems a mixture of success and failure. But if we consider the degree to which his ultimate and supreme aims were realized, and in what measure the central power was strengthened and the new national union consolidated, his administration, in its net result, seems notably successful. When he withdrew from office, he left the empire strong in arms, independent in its finances, and exercising an undisputed sovereignty in legislation and administration.

Alien elements in the empire

In this substantial structure there were, however, weakening flaws. The earlier expansion of Prussia had brought under German rule millions of Poles. The annexation of Schleswig-Holstein and of Alsace-Lorraine brought into the empire other alien elements. Holstein, indeed, was German, and so, for the most part, was Schleswig, but northern Schleswig was substantially Danish. The Alsacians were German in origin and in speech, but as thoroughly French in sentiment as the French-speaking Lorrainers. Persistent efforts to Germanize these territories had no result except to increase their repugnance to German rule. "In Prussia," Treitschke confessed, "they have a fatal facility of giving offence to the people of newly annexed countries."

Alsace-Lorraine

It does not appear that Bismarck believed that the Poles or the Danes could be reconciled to German rule. In 1871, however, he expressed a hope that the Alsacians, and possibly also the Lorrainers, might in time be converted into loyal Germans. If a specific territorial patriotism could be created

in Alsace-Lorraine, the people would be half Germanized. This immediate end might be attained, he thought, by giving them first local self-government and later territorial autonomy. When they had enjoyed these blessings for a generation, they might be unwilling to go back under the autocratic rule of French mayors and the direct control of a centralized bureaucratic government. This plan, however, had no fair trial. Germany was apparently unable to furnish officials capable of understanding it, much less of carrying it out. The German burgomasters were as autocratic as the French and were far less tactful. Conciliatory measures proposed by the civil administration were opposed by the military authorities, and, in the end, Bismarck found it necessary to take supreme direction of the territorial administration. After a few years he abandoned the idea that it would be possible to create a contented Alsace-Lorraine, and in 1879 he declared that this frontier territory must be kept under strict control.

In January, 1887, he said, in the Imperial Diet:

> Even in 1871 . . . I was not much inclined to take Metz. At that time I was for the language frontier. However, I consulted the military authorities before reaching a final decision . . . and I received the answer . . . Metz is worth 100,000 men.

This statement at least shows that Bismarck wished to throw upon other shoulders the responsibility for the annexation of Lorraine, and it comes near showing that he regarded it as a mistake.

Schleswig

Danish resentment was increased by the nullification of a clause in the treaty of Prague, providing that the people of northern Schleswig should be permitted to decide by popular vote whether they were to be Prussians or Danes. This clause was inserted at the instance of Napoleon III. The engagement assumed by Prussia, however, was not to France nor to Denmark; Austria alone was entitled to demand its fulfilment; and in 1878 Austria released Prussia from this obligation. Legally,

therefore, Prussia had clear title to the whole of Schleswig; but the non-fulfilment of the Prussian promise left an impression of bad faith and had an unfavorable effect on neutral opinion.

The annexation of northern Schleswig and of Alsace-Lorraine violated the principle in which alone contemporary neutral opinion found justification for the Bismarckian wars — the principle of nationality. These annexations also greatly increased the probability of further warfare, in which Germany's gains would be imperilled.

Foreign relations of the empire 1871–90

Bismarck's foreign policy after 1871 was, in its main lines, extremely simple. Its object was to avert war. Germany had obtained all that it desired. It belonged, as the chancellor repeatedly insisted, to the satisfied or, as he once said, to the "satiated" nations. It had nothing to gain by further victories and much to lose by defeat. The chief menace to its peace came, of course, from France. It was inconceivable that the French people should easily abandon

the hope of reconquering their lost provinces. But, as things stood, France was not likely to declare war without some strengthening alliance. It was therefore the task of German diplomacy to confirm and extend Germany's friendships and to secure from other powers, if possible, pledges of support or, at least, assurances of neutrality if Germany should be attacked. It was also desirable, from the German point of view, and it was not without precedent in European practice, to sow suspicion and promote enmity between France and its possible allies. Both policies were means to a single end, the isolation of France.

League of the three emperors

To this end Bismarck recurred to the policies of Metternich and sought to revive the traditions of the Holy Alliance. The conservative powers of Europe must make common front against the revolutionary spirit reëmbodied in the third French republic. To the Russian emperor these arguments made an especially strong appeal because of the growing menace of Russian nihilism, but they found an echo also in

Vienna. So came into existence, in 1871, the so-called "League of the Three Emperors." It was an entente rather than a league, for although a general agreement was reached there was no formal treaty. This entente lasted until the close of the Turco-Russian war in 1878, when the terms of peace imposed upon Turkey, which seemed to give Russia substantial control of the Balkans, led Austria to act in concert with Great Britain in demanding the revision of the peace treaty by a European congress.

For the isolation of France as a menace to monarchic institutions it was obviously essential that France should remain a republic. To promote a monarchic restoration would be, for Germany, a blunder. Such a change of government would make it easier, Bismarck believed, for France to obtain allies. The attempt of the German ambassador at Paris, Count von Arnim, to carry out an opposite policy and to aid the Royalists, was the beginning of a quarrel with the chancellor which ended in Arnim's ruin.

Russia

To retain, if possible, the good will of Russia was recognized, both by the emperor and by Bismarck, as a matter of supreme importance. The friendly attitude assumed by the Russian emperor in 1866 and 1870 had greatly facilitated the unification of Germany. But Russia's friendship was a precarious possession. It rested in part upon the insecure basis of dynastic sympathy, and in part upon a lively expectation of services to be rendered by Germany. It proved difficult for Bismarck to satisfy this expectation. In 1870 Germany helped Russia to set aside the treaty of Paris (1856) and reassert her supremacy in the Black Sea; during the Turco-Russian war, in 1877 and 1878, Germany observed a friendly neutrality; and at the Congress of Berlin Bismarck, as "the honest broker," endeavored, as he claimed, to mediate fairly between Russia on the one hand and Austria and England on the other, and to save for Russia some of the fruits of its victories. But his support seemed to the Russians insincere. The ill-success of the Russian

diplomacy was laid at his door; and the relations between the two empires became strained and unfriendly.

Austria

The new friendship with Austria-Hungary rested on a firmer basis than the older friendship with Russia: it was based on reciprocal interests. For the maintenance of German and Magyar rule over millions of Slavs Austria needed the support of Germany. Germany needed support against an eventual Franco-Russian alliance. Throughout the diplomatic struggle with Austria which culminated in the war of 1866, Bismarck had steadily maintained that, when the German question was settled, Prussia and Austria, ceasing to be rivals, would become friends. For this reason he had insisted, in 1866, that peace should be made on moderate terms. This politic forbearance now reaped its reward. In 1879 Germany and Austria formed a defensive alliance. Each party bound itself to aid the other against a Russian attack. If either party should be attacked by any power

German-Austrian alliance 1879

other than Russia — say Austria by Italy or Germany by France — the other party was bound only to observe a benevolent neutrality, unless Russia should give armed support to such an attack, in which case each party was to come to the other's aid.

The triple alliance 1882

In 1882 Italy, angered by the French occupation of Tunis, joined the German-Austrian alliance. This new alignment not only deprived France of a possible ally, but was also a further guaranty of the peace of Europe, since the Italian government was obliged to renounce, or at least to postpone, all plans for wresting "unredeemed Italy" from Austrian rule. To avoid other conflicts, it was agreed in 1887, when the triple alliance was renewed, that neither Austria nor Italy should attempt to occupy any territory in the Balkan peninsula without preliminary accord, and that such accord should be based on the principle of reciprocal compensation. This agreement was reached through Bismarck's mediation, and it virtually gave Germany the position of an umpire in disputes between its two allies.

Meanwhile externally friendly relations were reëstablished between the courts of St. Petersburg and Berlin. In June, 1881, apparently in consequence of the assassination, three months earlier, of Alexander II — an event which seemed to emphasize the need of a union of all the conservative powers — Alexander III agreed to a reëstablishment of the league of the three emperors. This new league was more formal than the old: a treaty was signed, in which each of the three empires promised benevolent neutrality in case any one of them should be involved in war with a fourth power. This treaty, concluded for a term of three years, was renewed in 1884. In 1887, however, when disturbances in the Balkans, starting with a quarrel between the Russian emperor and Alexander of Battenberg, prince of Bulgaria, had again strained the relations between St. Petersburg and Vienna, Russia refused to renew the treaty.

New league of the three emperors 1881–87

Russia offered, however, to make a separate treaty with Germany. Such a treaty, usually described as the "reinsurance" treaty, was

Reinsurance treaty with Russia 1887

signed in June, 1887. Each party pledged itself to observe a benevolent neutrality in case the other should be involved in war with a third power; but this pledge was not to hold if Austria or France should be attacked by Russia or by Germany. This provision left Germany free to defend Austria against a Russian attack, as it was bound to do by the treaty of 1879. It gave Germany a less complete "reinsurance," that is, a less complete assurance of Russian neutrality in an eventual Franco-German war, than it had secured in the tripartite treaty of 1881, for it left Russia free to intervene if Germany should attack France.

So long, however, as Germany desired to maintain the peace of Europe, it was protected by this network of treaties against the peril of an offensive alliance between France and any continental power.

A further advantage was that, in any dispute between Austria and Russia, Germany was enabled to play the same part which the triple alliance enabled it to play in disputes between Austria and Italy, that of

mediator. In 1887 Bismarck explained to the Imperial Diet and to Europe:

> The difficult part of our task is not to keep peace ourselves with Austria or with Russia, but to keep peace between Austria and Russia. There are, in fact, rival and competing interests which make it more difficult for these two friends of ours to keep peace with each other than it is for us to keep peace with each of them. It is our task to smooth out these difficulties, so far as possible, and to act in both cabinets as the advocate of peace.

This rôle could be played with success only so long as Russia and Italy regarded Germany as disinterested. Bismarck maintained that Germany could be trusted because it had no interest in the Balkans that would justify it in "risking the sound bones of a single Pomeranian musketeer." In the reinsurance treaty of 1887 Germany recognized "the preponderant and decisive influence" of Russia in Bulgaria and in East Rumelia. Bismarck maintained, however, that Austria had similar rights in the western Balkans, and he sought to persuade the two governments to agree upon a definite delim-

itation of their spheres of influence. In this he was not successful.

To Bismarck the integrity of the Austro-Hungarian empire was a German interest of the first order. He steadily insisted, however, that Germany would lend no support to aggressive Austrian policies in the Balkans. In 1887 he stated that the relations between Germany and Austria did not "rest on the basis that either of the two nations can be required to put itself and its full power . . . at the service of the other." In 1892 he wrote:

> On the part of Germany, the view consistently represented at Vienna was that the alliance covered only the Austro-Hungarian monarchy, not also its oriental policy against Russia. For this Austria was always advised . . . to seek protection from equally interested states, such as England and Italy.

Great Britain

Between Germany and Great Britain there was no serious conflict of interests. The inauguration of a German colonial policy might easily have bred trouble; but, as al-

ready noted, this policy was so conducted as to avoid hostility. Between Great Britain, on the one hand, and France and Russia on the other, there were more serious clashes of interest; and it is possible that Bismarck might have established an entente with Great Britain which would have greatly strengthened the triple alliance. As it was, an understanding was reached between Great Britain and Italy that, in the event of war, Italy should be protected against a naval attack. That Bismarck always strove to maintain friendly relations with Great Britain is clear; but he doubted the value of an informal entente, and, until 1889, he seems to have made no serious effort to obtain a formal alliance. An understanding with one British cabinet was liable, he said, to be repudiated by the next, and no binding treaty could be concluded without the assent of the British Parliament. This, however, meant publicity, and Bismarck did not favor open covenants. In accordance with long established continental practice and his own preference, all

the political treaties that he concluded were secret. That an entente or alliance had been established was in most cases known, but texts of treaties were not published.[1]

In 1889, however, as Mendelssohn Bartholdy tells us, Bismarck proposed an open peace alliance between Germany and Great Britain; but this offer was rejected.

France

With France Germany's relations were, after 1871, usually friendly, in the diplomatic sense of the term. Twice, however, they were seriously strained. In 1875 and in 1887 there were "war scares." For these Bismarck always repudiated responsibility. In his memoirs he throws the blame in both cases on the German military authorities. There can be little doubt, however, that the threats of war that appeared in the German press were, if not instigated, at least encouraged

[1] The one exception was the publication, in 1888, of the Austro-German treaty of 1879. The first hint that a separate treaty had been concluded with Russia was given to the public by Bismarck in 1892, after his dismissal from office, and the character of this treaty was first revealed by him in 1896. Its text was not published until 1919.

by Bismarck. For promoting apprehension of impending war he had, in both cases, and particularly in 1875, political reasons. He expected, and to a degree he obtained, advantages at home and abroad. The rapid economic recovery of France after 1871 and the reëstablishment of her military strength were disquieting. French preparations for the next war were, if possible, to be discouraged. German military preparations were to be accelerated, and war scares made it easier to obtain the necessary appropriations. Stimulation of German patriotism would help the government in other political issues. It is an ancient but always effective policy "to busy giddy minds with foreign quarrels." In the conduct of Germany's foreign affairs also it was useful to insist that French unwillingness to accept the results of defeat was a permanent menace to the peace of Europe. Both in 1875 and in 1887 French politicians and journals failed to follow Gambetta's advice: "Always to think of war, never to talk of it." In 1875 Thiers told Hohenlohe, then German ambas-

sador to France, that the rumors of war "were disseminated from party motives" and "would be turned to account for electioneering purposes." In 1887, when General Boulanger was at the height of his popularity, there were similar unwise utterances. These gave Bismarck his opportunity. That both in 1875 and in 1887 he was playing with fire is undeniable, but he was confident that when the fire had served his purposes he could extinguish it. That he intended to provoke war is highly improbable. It would have been inconsistent with his entire policy from 1871 to his retirement.

Between these two years of strained relations there was a brief period in which Bismarck apparently sought a reconciliation. He offered the French government diplomatic support in colonial enterprises. He suggested that a continental league, including Russia and Italy, as well as France and Germany, might be formed to make head against Great Britain and to vindicate the equal right of all European powers to colonial expansion.

In these overtures Bismarck had more than one end in view. If France, Italy and Russia should simultaneously pursue a more active colonial policy in Africa and in Asia, it would be more difficult for Great Britain to oppose the colonial enterprises which Bismarck was already planning. French colonial expansion would bring France into conflict with other colonial powers and lessen its chances of securing any alliance against Germany. And if French attention could be diverted from Europe to other continents, the French mind might cease to be "hypnotized by the gap in the Vosges." To a degree, and for a time, all these objects were attained. Great Britain did not oppose the German annexations of 1884 in Africa and in the Pacific. In 1882 the French occupation of Tunis drove Italy into alliance with the central empires. And, in spite of this, it was publicly stated by the French government, in 1884, that not for two decades had the relations between France and Germany been so friendly. But when Bismarck said to Courcel, the French ambassador to Germany :

"Abandon the Rhine question, and I will help you to gain in all other matters whatever satisfactions you may desire," Courcel told him that the question of Alsace-Lorraine must be regarded as "*un domaine réservé.*" With the fall of the Ferry ministry, in 1885, the brief period of more friendly relations with Germany was ended. France, however, was still isolated.

In 1882 Bismarck said, in the Imperial Diet:

> If I can claim any merit in my conduct of foreign policy, it is that since the year 1871 I have prevented the formation of any coalition of superior power against Germany.

This merit he was still able to claim at the close of his career.

Bismarck's position in Europe

Not in Germany alone, but in Europe also, Bismarck held, for two decades, a singularly dominant position. His most recent English biographer, Grant Robertson, writes:

> From 1871 to 1890 Bismarck was the transcendent figure in European politics, with an influence akin

to, but far surpassing, the ascendency of Metternich from 1815 to 1848. . . . Lord Odo Russell (Lord Ampthill), who weighed his words, wrote from Berlin in 1880: "At St. Petersburg Bismarck's word is gospel, as well as at Paris and Rome, where his sayings inspire respect and his silences apprehension." And Lord Odo might have said the same with equal truth of Vienna, Madrid and Constantinople.

The position which Bismarck had won for Germany is indicated by the fact that during his chancellorship European congresses met, not as before in London or in Paris, but in Berlin.

Bismarck and the old emperor

Bismarck's relations with William I had long been satisfactory. The distrust with which the king at first contemplated the rapid resolutions and apparently rash actions of his minister had long since disappeared: no distrust could survive successes so brilliant and so continuous. If in the long run William realized that it was not he but his chancellor who was shaping history, his mind was too just to harbor resentment and his nature too noble for jealousy. In course of

time, as Marcks asserts and as we may well believe, William's confidence and gratitude ripened into sincere affection. After the establishment of the empire no court intrigues, however strongly supported, were able seriously to shake Bismarck's position. The alliance between the government and the Liberals after 1866 entailed many results which the emperor did not like; but he accepted them. The treaty of alliance with Austria in 1879 seriously distressed him, because it seemed to destroy all prospect of friendly relations with Russia; but he accepted that also. This was the last important conflict; during the remaining years of the old emperor's reign we hear of no more friction between him and his chancellor.

Frederick III, March 9–June 15, 1888

The death of William I and the brief reign of Frederick III wrought no change in the position or power of the chancellor. The humane and idealistic Frederick had little sympathy with Bismarck's rough and often cynical realism, but he showed no disposition to discharge a minister who had

rendered such services to the dynasty and the nation. Bismarck had equally little sympathy with such a character as Frederick's; but he stood ready to serve the son as loyally as he had served the father. Frederick's posthumous diary exhibits in the strongest light this antagonism of temperaments, and his own incapacity to understand Bismarck; but it also shows us how completely the stronger will, when it chose to make the effort, dominated the weaker. Had Frederick ascended the throne in full health of body and vigor of mind, the struggle for power which showed itself in his reign might have assumed larger proportions and a more acute character; but it would still have been a struggle, not between the monarch and his minister, but between the minister and other wills striving to impose themselves upon the monarch.

William II 1888

Whatever peril of a breach existed was thought to be removed when William II became emperor. The new ruler was but twenty-nine years old; he had grown up

during the triumphs of Bismarck's diplomacy; it was understood that he shared, or reflected, Bismarck's views.

Beginnings of friction

Differences of opinion, however, had arisen before Prince William came to the throne. In November, 1887, as Bismarck states in the third volume of his memoirs, the young prince sent to the chancellor, for approval, a draft of an imperial address to all the reigning princes of Germany. A copy of this address was to be sent, under seal, to each Prussian legation in Germany, for immediate delivery upon the prince's accession to the throne. Bismarck did not like the tone of this address; still less did he like its preparation while the prince's grandfather was still on the throne and his father was still living. In his reply the chancellor indicated that untimely revelation of the existence of this address would create a most unfavorable impression and that the proposed multiplication of copies, however safeguarded, would be dangerous. He would destroy the copy sent him and he advised the prince to burn his own copy. Before this reply was written,

A premature imperial rescript

Bismarck had received another letter from William. Answering this also, he gave his reasons for disapproving the prince's connection with a charitable enterprise conducted by a prominent clergyman, Pastor Stöcker. The chief reason was that Stöcker was also the leader of a Christian-Socialist movement. In his reply William defended his course in this matter but made no allusion to the address to the German princes. His silence on this point showed how sharply Bismarck's rebuke had stung him.

The labor question

Early in the reign of William II differences of opinion arose regarding the policy to be pursued in combating socialism. Bismarck wished to maintain repression. William favored conciliation: he advocated legislation restricting the work of women and children and forbidding Sunday labor. Bismarck thought further labor legislation undesirable. In this matter William had his way. In February, 1890, two imperial rescripts were issued, without ministerial counter-signature, announcing the new policy, for which the way was to be cleared by an international con-

ference on labor and social problems. In the third volume of his memoirs Bismarck charges William with a desire to bring the working classes to the support of the crown at the cost of their employers: the emperor's ideal, he asserts, was "popular absolutism." In this matter, however, William represented the trend of the time, and he found support among the German princes as well as in German popular sentiment. In the Imperial Diet a new and more stringent anti-Socialist bill, favored by Bismarck, was so amended as to repel the Conservatives and was then overwhelmingly rejected.

Ministerial government *versus* autocracy

In this defeat, Bismarck particularly resented the support given to William by a number of his own fellow-ministers. This support, he said, was obtained through the establishment of direct relations between the monarch and the single ministers. In previous reigns the heads of Prussian departments had made reports and submitted recommendations to the premier, and only through the premier had their recommendations reached the king. Under this system

the premier alone was directly responsible to the king; the other ministers were practically responsible to the premier. Since 1867 the same system had prevailed in the imperial chancellery. Disregarding precedent, William II received, and even sought suggestions from single Prussian ministers and from imperial secretaries. In his memoirs Bismarck asserts that the new monarch also sought information from subordinate departmental officials, in order to procure data for direct suggestions to the heads of departments. Under this new system the monarch, as emperor, was virtually his own chancellor and, as king of Prussia, his own premier. Against direct relations between the emperor and the secretaries in the imperial chancellery Bismarck could invoke previous usage only. Against such relations between the king of Prussia and single members of the Prussian cabinet he could appeal to a written text.

The ordinance of 1852

An ordinance of nearly forty years' standing required that all communication between the king and his ministers should pass through the president of the ministry. During the

long reign of William I this ordinance had been fully observed, both in the letter and in the spirit. Bismarck now demanded its enforcement. This demand William met with a proposal that the ordinance in question should be revoked. To this proposal Bismarck refused his ministerial consent. William apparently acquiesced in this decision; but he demanded shortly afterwards that Bismarck should keep him informed of all negotiations with members of parliament. This Bismarck refused to promise; and after an angry discussion the emperor demanded Bismarck's resignation. The immediate cause of this quarrel was an interview between Bismarck and Windthorst, in which, according to Bismarck's friends, Windthorst offered the chancellor the support of the Centre against the emperor — an offer which the chancellor declined to consider — while, according to the story that reached the emperor's ears, it was Bismarck who was seeking such an alliance against his imperial master. Bismarck at first refused to resign and demanded an open dismissal; but in

Windthorst interview

Bismarck's enforced resignation March 20 1890

response to a second demand he tendered his resignation, which was immediately accepted.

Looking back, Bismarck was convinced, as he tells us in the third volume of his memoirs, that during the twenty-one months of his service as William II's chancellor, "the emperor suppressed only with difficulty his desire to rid himself of his inherited mentor — until it exploded." William did not wish to be "overshadowed by a chancellor-cloud, resembling that of Richelieu and Mazarin." He was strongly impressed, Bismarck believed, by a remark of Count Waldersee, that Frederick the Great would never have been "the Great," if at the beginning of his reign he had found and kept a minister of Bismarck's importance and power.

His effort to keep the chancellorship

If Bismarck failed to realize, except in retrospect, that his position had become untenable, it was because he clung to power for its own sake. In his own mind this motive was doubtless disguised by a legitimate distrust of the young emperor's wisdom and a conviction that it was his duty to exercise

as long as possible a restraining influence upon hasty and inconsiderate action, particularly in foreign affairs. He tells us that he did not wish to break with the emperor on the labor question or on any internal issue. He was willing to resign the Prussian premiership, but he felt it his duty to retain, if possible, the chancellorship of the empire. Up to the last moment, as he indicated in his letter of resignation, he hoped that the emperor would accept this compromise.

Conflicting foreign policies

At least nine months earlier, however, Bismarck was aware of a divergence between his views and those of the emperor as regarded Germany's foreign policy. In June, 1889, Count Philip Eulenburg, whose relations with William were at that time intimate, told Herbert Bismarck that the emperor regarded the chancellor's policy as "too Russophil." This meant, as appeared later, that in controversies between Austria and Russia William was inclined to give Austria greater and more open support than Bismarck thought advisable. It did not mean that at that time William failed to recognize the importance

of friendly relations with Russia. A difference of opinion between the emperor and his chancellor in the following autumn (October 17) related solely to the expediency of a proposed imperial visit to Alexander III at Spala in the summer of 1890. To this plan Bismarck raised objections. Spala, he explained, was an unsuitable place for an official visit. It was a place to which Alexander went for rest and for undisturbed enjoyment of the society of his wife and children. Bismarck knew that in a previous visit to St. Petersburg William had made an unfavorable impression upon Alexander, and he thought, as he says in his memoirs, that it would not be desirable "to bring into too close contact the tsar with his mistrustful reserve and the emperor with his aggressive amiability."

The final breach

It was not until March, 1890, when the differences between William and Bismarck in German home affairs had become acute, that the divergence of their views of foreign policy was revealed with equal clearness. Relations between Austria and Russia were

still strained: Russian control of Bulgaria was resisted. William had seen German consular reports regarding movements of Russian troops which led him to believe that war was in sight. He wrote to Bismarck:

> The reports indicate most clearly that the Russians are in the fullest strategic preparation for war. . . . You should long ago have drawn my attention to the terribly menacing peril. It is more than high time to warn the Austrians and to take counter measures.

For such measures Bismarck would not assume responsibility. They meant the abandonment of the policy which he had consistently followed: to refuse overt support to Austria in the Balkans, when such support would bring Germany into conflict with Russia.

The wide difference between the emperor's views and Bismarck's is clearly shown in Prince Hohenlohe's memoirs. At the end of March, less than a fortnight after Bismarck's dismissal, the prince notes in his diary:

> The emperor told the generals that Russia wished to begin a military occupation of Bulgaria and, in

the meantime, to assure herself of the neutrality of Germany. He said that he had promised the emperor of Austria to be a loyal ally and he would keep his word. The occupation of Bulgaria by the Russians would mean war with Austria, and he could not leave Austria in the lurch. . . . Bismarck was ready to abandon Austria.

Bismarck, on the contrary, meant to observe at the same time the terms of the treaty of 1879, in which German military support was promised to Austria in case of a Russian attack, and the terms of the reinsurance treaty of 1887, in which Germany gave Russia free hand in Bulgaria. A Russian occupation of Bulgaria would not have been an attack upon Austria. It would have meant war only in case it were resisted by Austria. German support of Austria in such a war would have been an open violation of the treaty of 1887. William's readiness to violate that treaty fully explains his subsequent refusal to renew it.

In a paper which Bismarck read to the Prussian cabinet on March 17, announcing his intention to resign the imperial chancel-

lorship as well as the Prussian premiership, he said:

> Today I have become convinced that I can no longer represent his majesty's foreign policy. Despite my trust in the triple alliance, I have never lost sight of the possibility that it may some time fail us. . . . For this reason I have always endeavored never to break down completely the bridge between us and Russia.

Four years earlier, in an official dispatch to the Austrian government counselling patience in the treatment of the Bulgarian question, Bismarck had written:

> Austria must never break with Russia, relying solely on German support and without a guaranty of the attitude of the western powers. . . . We might thereby pave the way for a Russian-English-French coalition, in the face of which the situation of the allied empires would be most difficult and the trustworthiness of Italy would become doubtful.

The news of Bismarck's dismissal was received, throughout Germany, with consternation. His departure from Berlin, a few days later, was signalized by striking

demonstrations of popular affection and sorrow. Until 1866 he had been upheld by the king alone against almost universal hatred and distrust. He had now lost the support of the crown, but he had won the confidence and the love of the German people.

The quarrel with the emperor

The quarrel between the ex-chancellor and the emperor soon became open and bitter. In inspired editorials, speeches to visiting delegations and personal interviews Bismarck subjected the policy pursued by his successor, General Caprivi, to detailed and often scathing criticism. It was notorious, however, that William had now become his own chancellor and that the measures fathered by Caprivi were really William's; and the emperor retorted with circular notes to the foreign powers, explaining that no weight was to be attached to Bismarck's utterances. There appeared also semi-official threats of prosecution for libel or for treason, which were wisely left unrealized. All that the emperor could do, in fact, was to place Bismarck under a social ban, as far as court functions and public cere-

monies were concerned, to request foreign courts to withhold from him and his family all social recognition, and to withdraw from Bismarck's friends and admirers all governmental favors and privileges.

A formal reconciliation

To the great relief of the German people, this unseemly contest was ended by a public and formal reconciliation. A severe illness by which the prince was attacked in the summer of 1893 facilitated overtures on the part of the emperor. They were courteously received; and in January, 1894, amid demonstrations of lively popular satisfaction, the dismissed servant and his imperial master exchanged visits at Berlin and Friedrichsruh, with much of the state and ceremony which surrounds the intercourse of potentates of equal rank. In the following year the emperor figured prominently in the celebration of Bismarck's eightieth birthday. An imperial visit to Friedrichsruh opened a series of demonstrations which were protracted for a fortnight, and which were compressed within that period only by the orders of Bismarck's physicians. Representative

Bismarck's eightieth birthday

delegations came from all parts of the empire; addresses and gifts poured in, not only from Germany and the German colonies, but from every considerable body of German-speaking residents in foreign lands. The only discordant note in this national festival was the refusal of the Imperial Diet, controlled by Bismarck's old antagonists, Ultramontanes, Particularists, Radicals and Social Democrats, to pass a formal vote of congratulation; but this refusal evoked so general an outburst of popular indignation that the incident helped to emphasize the reverence and affection of the German people for their great statesman.

Honors

Before his retirement from power, Bismarck had received, both from the king whom he made emperor and from the people whom he made into a nation, many substantial tokens of appreciation and gratitude. After the conclusion of the Gastein convention William I conferred upon him the title of count, and when the German empire was established that of prince. The king also gave him the estate of Friedrichsruh in

Lauenburg. In 1866, when the government proposed to the Prussian Diet the bestowal of dotations upon Moltke, Roon and other generals, the Diet, of its own motion, placed Bismarck's name at the head of the list, and voted him the largest sum — 400,000 thalers ($288,000). In 1871, in connection with a similar series of dotations, the Imperial Diet voted him 750,000 thalers ($540,000). In 1885, when the prince completed his seventieth year, the sum of 2,379,143.94 marks (nearly $571,000) was raised by popular subscription. The committee which received the subscription expended 1,150,000 marks in the redemption of a part of the estate of Schönhausen, sold by the prince's father. The letter of presentation declared it a fitting thing that Germany, to which the prince had restored so much of its lost territory, should restore to the prince the lands held by his ancestors. The remainder of the fund was converted, at the prince's desire, into a perpetual foundation for the support of candidates for appointment in the higher institutions of learning

and for the relief of the widows of teachers in such institutions. In 1890, in accepting Bismarck's resignation, William II conferred upon him the title of duke of Lauenburg and advanced him to high military rank. The latter promotion he accepted; the ducal title he declined, although, as he remarked: "It might be convenient if I wished to travel incognito." The emperor also offered him, as a pension, the continuance of his official salary; but this offer was rejected.

Criticism of imperial policies 1890–98

Bismarck's formal reconciliation with the emperor did not restrain him from further and frequent attacks upon the "new course" of German diplomacy. Articles evidently inspired by him, explaining and defending his own policies and criticising those of the German foreign office, continued to appear in German journals, most frequently in the *Hamburger Nachrichten*, of which he was practically a corresponding editor.

For the study of Bismarck's official career his utterances after his dismissal are of value:

they give details and points of view which supplement his speeches and his posthumous memoirs. For the period from his dismissal to his death they are of far greater value. His memoirs seem to have been completed, or left uncompleted, in 1892; further criticisms, representing his immediate reaction to current events, continued to be published until a few months before his death. All Bismarck's words, spoken or written, are to be taken, like those of other statesmen, with due allowance for the motives by which they were apparently inspired and the purposes which they were probably intended to subserve. In so far, however, as his utterances deal with policies to be followed and perils to be avoided in the future, they constitute his political testament, and there is a strong presumption in favor of their sincerity. Many of his warnings, too, have since been justified. Throughout his active career he exhibited a remarkable degree of foresight, and in his retirement he showed himself one of those with whom

Forecasts and warnings

> Old experience doth attain
> To something of prophetic strain.

Austria and Russia

He regarded the abandonment of the reinsurance treaty with Russia as a grave error. When informed that Caprivi found Germany's treaty relations with Austria and with Russia "too complicated," he admitted, with a certain malice, that the maintenance of those relations "of course required a considerable degree of diplomatic skill." He knew the real reason why the treaty with Russia had not been renewed, but this he could not fully reveal, for such a revelation would at once have brought about the result which he feared — a complete break between Germany and Russia. In 1892 he went no further than to say:

> Already there are indications that the attitude of German policy is no longer completely neutral in eastern affairs, as it was formerly, and to Germany's advantage.

And in his memoirs he says:

> If the breach, or even the alienation, between us and Russia should seem irremediable, then Vienna would believe itself entitled to make greater claims upon the services of its German ally; first, in the

extension of the *casus foederis*, which, up till now, according to the published text, goes no further than defense against a Russian attack upon Austria; secondly, in a request to substitute for the *casus foederis*, as now defined, the representation of Austrian interests in the Balkans and in the East. . . . It is not, however, the duty of the German empire to lend its subjects, with their goods and their lives, for the realization of its neighbor's aspirations.

That Germany had no direct interests in the Balkans was a conviction in which he never wavered. In his memoirs he says:

It would be of advantage to Germany if in one way or another, physically or diplomatically, the Russians established themselves in Constantinople and had to defend it. We should then no longer be in a position to be used by England, and occasionally also by Austria, as the dog to be set barking against Russian lustings for the Bosphorus, but we could wait to see whether Austria was attacked.

And in 1892 he asked:

Why should the burden of resistance to Russia be rolled off the shoulders of the interested British empire upon those of the disinterested German empire?

He foresaw that isolated Russia, seeking support against the triple alliance, would come to an understanding with isolated France. In his farewell address to the Prussian cabinet, he said: "Russia needs the existence of France as a great power, as we need that of Austria."

Colonies and fleet

He viewed with distrust the further and more active development of Germany's colonial policy. Hofmann, the editor of the *Hamburger Nachrichten*, tells us that when he showed Bismarck the first map of the eastern Asiatic coast on which the German leasehold of Kiao-chau was marked off, the prince looked at it for some time and then said: "Big enough for all sorts of foolishness." He did not live to hear William II announce that Germany's future lay on the water; but in 1895, when there was agitation for a greater navy, he said, in reply to an address: "I should consider it an exaggeration for Germany to compete with the French or with the English navy." He felt that a more energetic colonial policy and the

building of a powerful navy would mean friction with Great Britain, and that British hostility would imperil the maintenance of the triple alliance. Three years earlier, in 1892, he predicted that "if England is opposed to Germany, we can never count on Italy's help." Great Britain and Italy

Closely asociated with imperialistic expansion is the tendency to take part in world politics even where national interests are not directly involved. The diplomatic intervention of Germany, in unison with Russia and France, to compel Japan, in 1895, to surrender the peninsula of Liao-tung aroused in Bismarck's mind apprehensions which were expressed in two leading articles in the journal which he controlled. If this joint action meant better relations with Russia, it was of advantage; but why should Germany arouse Japanese hostility? *"Weltpolitik"*

In 1897 he wrote, in the *Leipziger Neueste Nachrichten:*

> Nothing could be more strongly opposed to Germany's interest than to enter upon more or less dar-

ing and adventurous enterprises, guided merely by the desire to have a finger in every pie, to flatter the vanity of the nation or to gratify the ambitions of those who rule it. To carry on a policy of prestige would be more in accordance with the French than with the German character. . . . If Germany should ever follow such a policy, she would not promote any German interests but would endanger the welfare of the empire and its position in Europe.

All these warnings obviously rest on the assumption that Germany should be content with the position it had attained and on a conviction that any gains the empire might make by further warfare were negligible in comparison with possible losses. While Bismarck was in office, the public expression of these views might be regarded as perfunctory; but in 1886 he wrote to General Bronsart von Schellendorff, then Prussian minister of war: "The present German empire would not remain intact after a lost campaign"; and his adherence to the same views in his latest writings strengthens the impression of sincerity.

Militarism

Bismarck saw risk of war, not only in an erroneous conduct of foreign affairs, but also in the disturbing influence of military views and ambitions. His reflections on the relation of this influence to civil policy are presented in many parts of his memoirs. One passage reads:

> It is natural that, in the General Staff of the army, not only younger officers of ambition but also strategists of experience should feel the desire to turn to account and to make clear on the pages of history the efficiency of the troops they lead and their own capacity for leadership. It would be regrettable if the warlike spirit did not thus permeate the army. The duty of keeping the effects of this spirit within the limits which the need of the people for peace may justly demand, rests upon the political and not upon the military heads of the state.

Preventive war

A military theory which seemed to Bismarck particularly perilous to peace is the anticipatory or preventive theory. This demands that war be begun whenever it is deemed inevitable and the moment seems favorable. In 1867, during the dispute over

Luxemburg, the Prussian military authorities (as already noted) urged immediate war. Moltke said:

> I cannot but wish that the occasion given for war with France were taken advantage of. Unhappily I regard this war as absolutely unavoidable within the next five years, and within this period the now indisputable superiority of our organization and weapons will be equalled by France. . . . The sooner, therefore, we come to blows the better.

Bismarck, as we have seen, declared that he could not assume responsibility for the course of action proposed by Moltke. He explained that "unforeseen events might alter the situation and avert what seemed inevitable."

To whatever extent Bismarck may have been responsible for the war scares of 1875 and 1887, it is clear that they were actively promoted by the German military authorities. In 1873, and persistently afterwards until 1914, these authorities insisted that Germany would not be safe until France was crushed. In 1876, in a speech disavowing any intention on the part of the German government to attack France, Bismarck emphatically con-

demned preventive war. He asked the German deputies what they would have thought of a proposal, on his part, to start a war without any special reason, simply because it seemed possible that within a few years Germany might be attacked and, to prevent this, it was desirable "to fall quickly on our neighbors and hew them to pieces before they had fully recovered their strength." Would not the deputies have wished that he be subjected to medical examination, in order to determine how, after long experience in politics, he could have perpetrated this gigantic stupidity (*diese kolossale Dummheit*)? Such a preventive war, he said, would be "suicide in apprehension of death." And twenty years later he wrote, in his memoirs:

> Such a war, in my opinion, would not have led to permanently tenable conditions in Europe, but might well have given rise to a common feeling of distrust on the part of Russia, Austria and England, and eventually to concerted action on their part against the new and not yet consolidated empire, which, in waging such a war, would have started

on the road on which the first and second French empires, in a continuous policy of war and prestige, went to meet destruction. Europe would have seen in our action an abuse of the power we had acquired, and every one's hand . . . would have been persistently raised against Germany or would have been on the sword hilt.

In February, 1888, in one of his most famous parliamentary speeches, he said to the German deputies:

If I were to come before you and say: We are seriously menaced by France and Russia; it is to be foreseen that we shall be attacked; that is my conviction as a diplomatist; according to military information it is better for our defense to employ the anticipatory thrust of the attack and open hostilities at once; accordingly, I ask the Imperial Diet for a credit of a milliard of marks in order to start the war against both our neighbors — well, gentlemen, I do not know whether you have sufficient confidence in me to vote such a grant. I hope not. . . . It will be very hard to make it clear to the provinces, to the federated states and their people, that the war is inevitable, that it has to be. The question will be asked: "Are you quite sure of this? Who knows?". . . If in the end we proceed to attack, the whole weight of the imponderables, which

weigh much heavier than material weights, will be on the side of our enemies whom we have attacked.

Three months later — and only five days before his father's death — Crown Prince William submitted to the chancellor a statement of the reasons why it seemed advantageous, from a purely military point of view, to start at once a war against Russia. This communication was suggested, in Bismarck's opinion, by Count Waldersee, whom William afterwards made chief of staff.[1]

[1] Doubt is cast on the sincerity of Bismarck's opposition to preventive war, because, on one occasion at least, he threatened to start such a war. In 1874 he told Prince Hohenlohe, who had been appointed German ambassador to France, that if the French meant to start a war in five years, Germany would start it in three. There is a report, less authentic because at third hand, that he made a similar threat in 1887; but in this case he is quoted, not as personally advocating a preventive war, but only as stating that the military authorities demanded it. In both cases we have utterances intended to subserve an immediate purpose. If a war scare was advisable, it was desirable to create the impression that Germany desired war; and since the only theory on which Germany could be assumed to desire war was the preventive theory, Bismarck invoked it. If the com-

Distrust of William II

Bismarck's misgivings regarding Germany's future were based largely, if not chiefly, on the young emperor's desire to govern as well as to reign, to take into his own hands the direct control of internal and of foreign policy, relegating his chancellor and ministers to the position of under-secretaries. For this task William II was qualified, in Bismarck's judgment, neither by training nor by temperament. He came to the throne, we are told, "with no other impressions regarding internal politics than those derived from regimental life and association with other young officers." When, in 1886, by his grandfather's decision and in spite of his father's remonstrance, he was sent to the foreign office for his first training in statecraft, Bismarck found him disinclined to persistent work; and a similar report came

mendable utterances of a statesman are to be discredited whenever they are obviously intended for immediate effect, it is only fair that inconsistent utterances be taken with the same discount. The condemnation of preventive war in his memoirs, when no immediate political result could have been in view, is evidence of sincerity.

from von Brandenstein, who was charged with the prince's instruction in civil administration.

In his protest against giving the young prince instruction in diplomacy before he had learned anything of internal affairs, Crown Prince Frederick, as Bismarck tells us, characterized his son's real knowledge as fragmentary, and ascribed to him "an inclination to arrogance and exaggerated self-esteem" and "a tendency to over-hasty judgments." When, eight years later, in 1894, Prince Hohenlohe was appointed to succeed General Caprivi as chancellor, Bismarck warned the prince that the difficulty of the position "lay in his majesty's sudden decisions."

Comparing William II with his immediate lineal ancestors, Bismarck says, in the third volume of his memoirs:

> Traits which were basic in the characters of Frederick William III, William I and Frederick III are not conspicuous in our young master. A certain shy distrust of their own capacities has been replaced, in the fourth generation, by a degree of as-

sured self-confidence such as we have not seen on the throne since Frederick II, except in the case of the reigning monarch.

Such a monarch, in Bismarck's judgment, would not be likely to draw into his service the best qualified counsellors. When, in connection with the first of the "chancellor crises" after Bismarck's dismissal, the German press commented on the scarcity of suitable candidates, Bismarck wrote:

To find persons who, by virtue of their talents as well as their character, seem indicated for the position of imperial chancellor, but who represent no convictions of their own, is of course no easy matter.

Autocracy

In his memoirs he warns his countrymen against the dangers of direct monarchic government:

Former rulers had more regard for capacity than for obedience in their advisers. If obedience alone is the criterion, demands will be made on the all-round endowment of the monarch which even Frederick the Great could not meet, although in his time the conduct of the state in war and in peace was less difficult than it is today.

Bismarck feared that under William II military views and ambitions would not be subjected to adequate political control. The military spirit, he wrote, "becomes dangerous only under a monarch whose policy lacks sense of proportion."

The evils which Bismarck feared might, he thought, fall first upon Germans yet unborn:

> Faults in the conduct of foreign policy are, as a rule, clearly recognized by public opinion only when it is able to look back over the history of a generation. The *Achivi qui plectuntur* are not always the immediate contemporaries of the mistaken course of action.

And in another passage:

> I see grave dangers coming to Germany . . . coming also to all Europe. The longer the catastrophe is delayed, the more terrible it will prove to be.

In a memorandum prepared in November, 1887, Bismarck indicated some of the probable consequences of a general European war and closed with the prophecy:

> The eventual war in prospect would have less the character of a conflict between governments

than of a struggle of the red flag against the elements of order and of conservatism.

Parliament

In his dismay at seeing the powers of the crown, which he had so greatly strengthened, grasped and used by a monarch whom he so deeply distrusted, and in the first heat of his quarrel with that monarch, Bismarck strove to incite the representatives of the German people to greater independence and, particularly, to freer criticism of governmental policy. In 1891 and 1892, in replies to addresses, he explained this change of attitude by saying:

> When I became minister, the crown was threatened by the people. . . . Hence I strove to strengthen the crown against parliament. Perhaps I went too far in that direction. . . . In building up the empire, some kind of dictatorship was necessary; but that cannot be regarded as a permanent feature. The task can be completed only when Germany possesses a powerful parliament which embodies our sense of unity.

"Free criticism," he said, "is indispensable to the monarchy." He said also that the responsibility of ministers should be increased.

In these speeches, and also in his memoirs, he protested against absolutism and indicated its dangers. The chief peril was that of "aggressive cabinet wars"; and he declared that "a nation that can be forced into such wars does not possess the right constitution."

On their face these utterances seem to show that Bismarck had become an advocate of parliamentary government. He was, however, always an opportunist. Some restraint must be imposed upon the new ruler; and if effective restraint was no longer to be exercised by responsible ministers — by which term Bismarck meant ministers to whom the powers of the crown were delegated — it must be sought in public opinion, freely voiced in the German parliament. Neither in these utterances nor in his memoirs is there any indication that he had come to favor cabinet government of the English type.

Personal characteristics

Bismarck was a man of great stature — six feet and two inches, English measure — and of athletic frame. In his youth and

early manhood he was an excellent fencer, a powerful swimmer and a tireless rider. A prolonged illness in 1859, however, seems to have left permanent ill results. His health was further undermined by imprudence in diet and irregularity of hours; and increasing weight made exercise difficult. Under the strain of responsibility from 1864 to 1898 he suffered constantly from sleeplessness. From time to time his physicians enjoined rest, and he was repeatedly constrained to take it; but rest was not easy to him. Despite all this, his capacity for protracted mental labor, always phenomenal, was unimpaired at the close of his public career.

His finest traits of character were devotion to duty, fearlessness and independence. He did not gain place and power by flattery or subservience; he was no courtier; had he been, he might have remained longer in office. In his personal relations, outside of politics, he was truthful and honorable. His marriage was a happy one; his wife, he said, had made him whatever he was.

His faults — and they were great — were

egoism and a petty vanity almost incomprehensible in so great a man; sensitiveness to slights and implacable vindictiveness against those who had thwarted or even opposed him; lack of gratitude to those who had served him; and arrogance, often carried to the point of insolence. Some of these offensive traits were undoubtedly aggravated by ill health and nervous irritation. The need to restrain their display grew less as his position in German and European politics became increasingly dominant. In Germany, his services were felt to be indispensable. In the late seventies, a story was current in Berlin that when a Prussian general complained to William I of Bismarck's insolence, the emperor replied: "Dear old friend, we must all be patient." When the grandson of William I became impatient, he found many to sympathize with him, for in governmental and court circles Bismarck had kept few friends and had made many enemies. His son, Herbert, whom he had made foreign secretary and a member of the Prussian cabinet, made even

more enemies, for he was more arrogant than his father. There was complaint, which was carried to the young emperor, of the prospect of a "Bismarck dynasty." The news of the chancellor's dismissal was received in official Berlin with profound relief. "The comfortable feeling here," Hohenlohe noted, "is universal."

To the last, however, when it seemed worth while, Bismarck could be more than courteous; he could exercise a compelling charm. He possessed strong social instincts and great social talents. The perception of the characteristic in men and in things, the faculty of sketching in words, the frequent wit and the constant caustic humor which made him one of the best of letter writers, made him also one of the best of talkers. This talent he turned to good account, not in European diplomacy only but in German politics as well. Many questions that could not be settled by debates in parliament were adjusted over the beer and in the smoke of his famous parliamentary breakfasts in the Wilhelmstrasse.

Speeches

He was not commonly regarded by the Germans as a good parliamentary speaker. In England he would have been regarded as one of the best. The German taste in public speaking inclines to the oratorical; Bismarck's manner was usually conversational. The substance and the arrangement of his speeches were excellent. They were always adapted rather to convince his hearers than to excite their admiration. They contained, nevertheless, more quotable sayings and have enriched the speech of Germany with more quotations, not, perhaps, than the writings of her great poets, but certainly than the spoken words of any German since Luther.

Writings

His writings have not only the excellence often observed in men of action — the simplicity, directness and vigor of a Wellington or a Grant — they have in high degree a distinctively literary quality and charm. The vague word is avoided, and the precise, unique word is found; the current phrase, that has lost its edge by wear, is replaced

by a phrase fresh-minted and clean-cut; there is the unexpected turn that is wit without the obvious intention, and the literary suggestion that is not quotation; there is everywhere the perception not only of the intellectual but also of the sensuous value of words — in sum, there is style. When Bismarck's letters were first published, the poet and novelist Heyse is said to have thanked God that that man had gone into politics, "because he would have spoiled our trade."

Qualities as a statesman

The qualities that distinguished Bismarck as a statesman were rapid and accurate perception of the central and decisive points in the most complicated situation; tenacity of purpose in following his chief end, combined with readiness to vary, with every change of circumstances, the mode of its pursuit; patience in awaiting and promptness in seizing the favorable moment for action; and a rare degree of moderation in moments of fullest triumph. Of this last trait he gave striking evidence in the

terms accorded to Austria and to the Prussian parliamentary opposition after the victories of 1866. In this, as in other matters, his foresight was remarkable. For each war that he promoted he made thorough diplomatic preparation. Except in 1870, Prussia waged no war, in his time, without an ally; and in 1870, as in 1864 and 1866, he had assured himself that the enemy nation would not be supported by any third power.

The rapidity with which the German unity wars were ended — the total duration of active hostilities in the three wars was but twelve months — is commonly ascribed to the efficient organization of the Prussian army and the able strategy of its commanders. No small part of the credit, however, perhaps the greater part, belongs to Bismarck's diplomacy — to the skill with which he made and held alliances and arranged or assured neutralities, and to the relative moderation of the terms imposed upon Prussia's defeated enemies.

To a man of Bismarck's domineering temper such restraint could not have been

easy. It must have been even harder for a man so high-strung and so irritable to await the favorable moment for decisive action. Many old struggles seem to be mirrored in his words to Hofmann:

> An indispensable requisite of the statesman is patience. He must be able to wait until the right moment has come, and must not act in too much of a hurry, however strong the temptation.

Political methods

Bismarck's political methods were often Machiavellian. It may, however, be questioned whether he was more unscrupulous than the other continental statesmen with whom he had to deal, or was only more astute. Nothing shows more clearly the lines on which European diplomacy was traditionally conducted, even in the nineteenth century, than the fact that at Frankfort, and in the earlier years of his Prussian premiership, Bismarck completely deceived his antagonists by frank avowal of his real purposes. This trick, however, could not be worked indefinitely; and in his later diplomacy frankness and evasion, truth and fiction, were so interspersed that it was as

difficult for his contemporaries as it is for the historian to determine what he really thought and meant.

To be thoroughly Machiavellian, however, it is not enough to be unscrupulous. The great Italian realist insisted that although the prince could not be virtuous he should always seem so. To create this impression, the prince should always claim to be virtuous and occasionally, when it did not cost him too much, should perform some conspicuously virtuous act. The first of these precepts Bismarck wholly failed to observe. By birth and breeding he was incapable of such hypocrisy. Like Frederick the Great, he went to the opposite extreme. The cynical frankness with which he narrated his artifices, after they had served his purposes, as in the matter of the editing of the Ems despatch, is perhaps the chief reason why he has come to be regarded as the most unscrupulous diplomatist of his time; and it is because of a memorable and unwisely frank utterance that to most of his countrymen, as to the world, he is rather the man of "iron

and blood" than the sagacious and far-seeing statesman.

Conspicuously virtuous acts are not easily found in his public record; but if the moderation that he displayed in moments of triumph and the submission of minor international disputes to arbitration are so to be regarded, he bettered Machiavelli's plan, for these acts returned a balance of direct political profit.

A new Macchiavellianism

He found and practised, however, a device for seeming virtuous which did not occur to the Italian master of statecraft. In each of his wars Bismarck saw to it that on its face, and at the moment, the Prussian cause should seem just. In each of these wars, Prussia's adversary either had broken a fairly recent treaty or was chargeable with the first overt act of aggression.

Denmark had violated in 1863 a treaty concluded with Prussia and Austria in 1852. Denmark's action impaired important German interests, because it undertook, contrary to its promises, to incorporate the German inhabitants of Schleswig in the Danish state.

In 1865, Austria had broken the treaty of Gastein, concluded between Austria and Prussia in 1863. Austria was also chargeable with the first overt act of hostility, in demanding that the German confederation should employ military force against Prussia. It was tolerably clear at the time that Prussia was really forcing Austria into war, but on the face of the record Austria was the aggressor.

By forcing war upon Denmark because of its breach of the treaty of 1852, and upon Austria because of its breach of the treaty of 1865, Bismarck got rid of both treaties and secured Schleswig-Holstein for Prussia. This result was reached by a procedure which was technically unassailable, for the treaty on which he took his stand at the outbreak of each war was replaced by the ensuing treaty of peace.

In 1870, and for years afterward, it seemed clear that France had made an unprovoked attack upon Germany. At the time, as he states in his memoirs, Bismarck explained to Moltke and Roon:

Success depends essentially upon the impressions that are produced in our own and other countries by the origin of the war; it is important that we be the nation attacked.

It should be remembered also that, in proportion as it became clear that Prussia was solving the problem of German unity, the public opinion of the world, fully convinced of the legitimacy of the principle of nationality, became increasingly favorable to the Prussian policy.

Diplomacy *versus* military strategy

The policy of awaiting attack, and the closely connected policy of keeping Prussia's military preparations, even when war was in sight, at least one move behind those of the adversary, repeatedly brought Bismarck into conflict with the Prussian military authorities, who emphasized the military advantages of earlier mobilization and prompt attack and failed to appreciate the political advantages of the defensive position.[1]

[1] See Munroe Smith, "Military Strategy versus Diplomacy" in the *Political Science Quarterly*, March, 1915; reprinted in *Militarism and Statecraft* (Putnams, 1918).

In Bismarck's time no treaty was violated by Prussia or by Germany. It is true that, in two instances at least, Bismarck failed to act in accordance with the spirit of a treaty which he had negotiated. The first instance was the nullification of the clause in the treaty of Prague which provided for a plebiscite in northern Schleswig. The second was the course he followed in the Bulgarian controversy. In the reinsurance treaty of 1887 he had recognized Russia's paramount interest in that country; but he nevertheless covertly helped Austria to secure Italian and British support in its opposition to the Russian policy. The treaty of Prague, however, was not technically violated; and in the Bulgarian controversy Germany gave formal support to every Russian proposal. Here again his conduct was correct on the face of the record.

Observance of standards of correct conduct, even if it be purely formal, imposes restraints. If treaties were never openly violated, and if governments were always willing to seem responsible for war and

always awaited an attack, there would be fewer wars.

Family

Bismarck was married in 1847 to Johanna von Puttkammer, to whose constant sympathy, unwavering confidence and watchful care the prince declared himself largely indebted for his success. Of this union three children were born — Marie (1848), married in 1878 to Count Cuno Rantzau; Herbert (1849), married in 1892 to Marguerite, Countess Hoyos; and William (1852), married in 1885 to Sibylla von Arnim. Both sons held important governmental positions. Count Herbert became in 1886 foreign secretary in the imperial chancellery, and in 1888 a member of the Prussian cabinet. When his father was dismissed he resigned these offices, but he afterward sat as a Conservative in the Imperial Diet. Count William was appointed in 1889 president of the district of Hanover, and in 1895 he became governor (*Oberpräsident*) of the province of East Prussia.

Bismarck died July 30, 1898, leaving instructions that he be interred without pomp

upon his estate at Friedrichsruh, and that upon his tomb be inscribed: "A faithful German servant of Emperor William I." Death

The literature dealing directly or chiefly with the life and achievements of Prince Bismarck is very extensive. His speeches have been published in several German editions; the best is Kohl's, in fourteen volumes. There is also a French edition. Many of his diplomatic and other state papers have been collected and edited by Poschinger: *Preussen im Bundestag* (1884); *Bismarck und der Bundestag: Neue Berichte Bismarcks aus Frankfurt* (1906); *Fürst Bismarck und die Parlamentarier* and *Fürst Bismarck und die Diplomaten*. Poschinger's *Fürst Bismarck als Volkswirth* also includes much documentary material. The first of these collections, which contains Bismarck's Frankfort despatches, has been translated into French. A general collection of official documents, edited by Aegidi, Klauhold and others, fills thirty-four volumes. Bismarck literature to 1898

For the study of Bismarck's diplomacy

after the Franco-German war we now have, thanks to the German revolution of 1918, material drawn directly from the archives of the German foreign office: *Die grosse Politik der europäischen Kabinette*, edited by Lipsius, Mendelssohn Bartholdy and Thimme. The six volumes published in 1922 cover the period from 1871 to 1890. With the documents are printed Bismarck's marginal notes. These, as Mendelssohn Bartholdy has pointed out, are in general harmony with his public declarations: they reveal no variant esoteric policy. This German material is supplemented by numerous Russian and Austrian publications, also drawn from governmental archives. Of especial value is a collection of Austria's political treaties, published by Pribram in 1920. An English translation, edited by Professor Coolidge of Harvard University, is entitled: *The Secret Treaties of Austria-Hungary.*

A very full collection of the speeches made, interviews granted and newspaper articles written or inspired by Bismarck after his dismissal, is to be found in Penzler's *Fürst*

Bismarck nach seiner Entlassung (1897–1898). In 1913–1914, Hofmann, the editor of the *Hamburger Nachrichten*, republished, under the title: *Fürst Bismarck 1890–1898*, the more important Bismarck articles that had appeared in his paper, together with a list of those not republished. Hofmann also gives his personal reminiscences of the ex-chancellor and quotes many of his utterances.

Much, perhaps most, of Bismarck's political and private correspondence has been published, but other letters will probably come to light. An interesting series of letters to Bronsart von Schellendorff, Prussian minister of war in the eighties, was first printed in 1922, in the *Deutsche Allgemeine Zeitung*. In 1901 Herbert Bismarck published a volume of his father's letters to his mother: *Fürst Bismarcks Briefe an seine Braut und Gattin*. An English version, somewhat abridged, appeared in the same year, under the title: *The Love Letters of Prince Bismarck*. These naturally reveal the gentler and kindlier side of Bismarck's nature; but even here his comments on persons and

events are often as trenchant and caustic as in his recorded oral utterances.

Of Bismarck's informal talk Poschinger has compiled several volumes: *Tischgespräche des Reichskanzlers* (of this there is an English translation); *Neue Tischgespräche;* and *Ansprachen des Fürsten Bismarck.* Quite as much or more of Bismarck's talk is to be found in other books, particularly in reminiscences published by associates, friends and retainers. Of such reminiscences, which help us to understand the human as well as the political Bismarck, there are many volumes. Tiedemann, who was chief of the imperial chancellery from 1876 to 1881, gives us, in the second volume of his memoirs, much of the real Bismarck.

Of value as regards Bismarck's domestic policies are the *Bismarck-Erinnerungen* of Lucius von Ballhausen, who was Prussian minister of agriculture. Of value, also, are Mittnacht's *Erinnerungen an Bismarck;* Keudell's *Fürst und Fürstin Bismarck,* of which there is a French translation; Wagener's *Erlebtes;* and Abeken's *Ein*

schlichtes Leben, which has been translated into English.

Busch

In Moritz Busch, who aided the chancellor in manipulating the German and foreign press during the war of 1870–1871, and who was occasionally called upon for like services after his brief official connection with the foreign office ended, Bismarck found his Boswell. Busch kept a diary, in which he faithfully recorded the chancellor's table talk and other utterances regarding events and persons. In these, royal persons are not spared, not even Hohenzollerns; and in some instances comment verges on lese-majesty. *Graf Bismarck und seine Leute* (English edition: *Bismarck in the Franco-German War*) and three volumes of *Tagebuchblätter* (English edition: *Bismarck: Some Secret Pages of his History*) are drawn from Busch's diary and are not only interesting but also valuable. Of less value are the retainer's appreciations of the chief's character and achievements: *Unser Reichskanzler* (two volumes), of which there is an English version, and *Bismarck und sein Werk*.

Kohl's *Bismarck Jahrbuch*, of which six volumes were published (1894–1899), gives many documents, letters and other Bismarckiana not elsewhere accessible.

Bismarck's memoirs

Of Bismarck's own memoirs we now have the complete text, in three volumes. He had himself arranged that these memoirs should be published immediately after his death. Only two volumes, however, were published in 1898. His heirs deemed it inadvisable that the third volume should appear during the reign of William II. After the establishment of a German republic, the publishers prepared to issue this volume, but its appearance was delayed by legal technicalities until 1921. In the German edition the entire work is entitled: *Gedanken und Erinnerungen von Otto Fürst von Bismarck.* In the English version the first two volumes are entitled: *Bismarck, the Man and the Statesman.* The English translation of the third volume bears, in England, the title: *New Chapters of Bismarck's Autobiography.* The American edition is entitled: *The Kaiser versus Bismarck.*

The work is not, in any proper sense, either an autobiography or a history. Its character is accurately expressed in its German title: it consists of reflections upon Prussian, German and European politics and of personal reminiscences. Like all Bismarck's utterances after his retirement, it was written partly to explain and justify his policies, partly to impress upon the German people his views regarding the future conduct of Germany's foreign relations.

The reminiscences, which form a large part of the book, add little to our knowledge of the historical events in which Bismarck figured, or even to our knowledge of his view of those events; for Sybel, Blum and other inspired chroniclers have given us fuller narratives which reflect with substantial accuracy the Bismarckian view. Certain important matters on which historical students have desired more light — particularly the Spanish candidacy — are left in the "darkness visible" of the contemporaneous official explanation. To the story, however, of Bismarck's breach with the

young emperor the third volume adds important details regarding the origin and character of the emperor's divergent views of German foreign policy.

The book neither adds to our knowledge nor changes our impression of the writer's personality. About himself, his sentiments and his ideas, Bismarck was always surprisingly communicative, even in his writings and public speeches; in private conversation he was often amazingly indiscreet; and he not only tolerated but encouraged the recording of his least guarded utterances. He sometimes told Busch that this or the other remark would make a bad impression; but he also said that when he was dead Busch might print what he pleased. To such self-revelations these memoirs, written in Bismarck's public manner, of course add nothing of importance.

The memoirs give us, however, more accurately than any preceding publication, Bismarck's view of some of his most prominent contemporaries. They contain a number of remarkable historical portraits. The old

emperor and Augusta, Frederick III and Victoria, Prince Gortschakoff and other diplomatists become in Bismarck's pages very real and very human. To this gallery the third volume adds a portrait of William II. Bismarck's merciless analysis of the young emperor's defects, faults and foibles is the more effective by reason of the restraint with which it is written. The indictment is drawn in so calm a tone that it reads like an unbiased judgment. "Revenge," Bismarck had said many years before, "is a dish to be eaten cold."

Secondary literature

Of what may be termed secondary Bismarck literature it is not easy to define the limits, but under any definition the bulk of such literature is enormous. Of first importance, perhaps, are the *Denkwürdigkeiten* of Prince Hohenlohe-Schillingsfürst (*Memoirs* in the English version), published in 1906. As ambassador to France and later as governor of Alsace-Lorraine, Hohenlohe stood for many years in official relations with Bismarck, and the two were always in close personal touch. Hohen-

lohe kept a diary, and for this reason his memoirs are exact in details and precise as to dates. Important also are the *Denkwürdigkeiten* of Bismarck's friend Field-Marshal von Roon. Marcks's biography of William I and Philippson's biography of Frederick III contain much Bismarck matter. Marcks's book is of special value because of his insight and fairness.

To the secondary Bismarck literature belong also the memoirs and the biographies of foreign rulers and statesmen who were Bismarck's allies or antagonists; the reminiscences of ambassadors to the court of Berlin; most of the German and much of the European political literature of the period; and, to a large extent, the historical literature that deals, whether in the form of books, of pamphlets or of articles, with European affairs from 1864 to 1890.

Histories and biographies

The best history of Bismarck's public career until 1871 is that given by von Sybel in his *Begründung des deutschen Reiches*, of which there is an English translation. Sybel's history is based, except as re-

gards the years 1867–1870, upon the Prussian archives. Their further use by him was barred by William II, because even in the earlier volumes the figure of the royal grandfather was overshadowed by that of his minister. A detailed account of Bismarck's conduct of affairs after 1871 is to be found in Blum's *Das Deutsche Reich zur Zeit Bismarcks*, a book largely inspired by the chancellor himself. Blum has also published an elaborate history covering Bismarck's entire career: *Fürst Bismarck und seine Zeit.* A valuable study of Bismarck's foreign policy after 1871 is Plehn's *Bismarcks auswärtige Politik nach der Reichsgründung*, published in 1920. Hahn's *Fürst Bismarck* (five volumes, 1878–1891) is rather a collection of material than a biography. Short biographies, each in one volume, have been published by Lenz, Egelhaaf and Klein-Hattingen. In 1909 Erich Marcks published the first volume: *Bismarck's Jugend 1815–1848*, of a biography which promised to be more authoritative and richer in personal details than any other; but no further

volumes have appeared. The best French biography, and one of the best in any language, is Matter's *Bismarck et son temps* (three volumes, 1905–1908). Of earlier English biographies Lowe's *Prince Bismarck* (two volumes, 1885) was the fullest. It is very readable, but is now out of date. Headlam's *Bismarck* (one volume, 1899) is worth reading; but the best of the English biographies is Grant Robertson's *Bismarck* (one volume, 1919).

Pictures and cartoons

Kohl's *Fürst Bismarck-Gedenkbuch* (1888) contains, with other Bismarckiana, a list of original paintings, sketches and photographs of the prince. Von Wartenburg's *Bismarcks äussere Erscheinung in Wort und Bild* gives verbal descriptions of Bismarck's appearance and ninety pictures.

Those who are curious to follow the changing appreciations of Bismarck as revealed in caricatures will find collected in one volume: *Bismarck-Album des Kladderadatsch*, all the Bismarck pictures published by the leading humorous paper of Berlin, from the first appearance of the Prussian deputy in 1847

to the dismissal of the German chancellor in 1890. Hochstetter, in his *Bismarck: Historische Karikaturen*, draws his selections from a wider field; and in Grand-Carteret's *Bismarck en caricatures* (1890) there are reproductions of one hundred and forty cartoons from comic papers in all parts of the world. Early in the Great War *Punch* reprinted some of its older German cartoons. In these, until 1890, Bismarck is usually the central figure. The collection of course includes "Dropping the Pilot." This picture, Grant Robertson tells us, was as satisfactory to William II as to Bismarck!

BISMARCK
AS A PHRASE-MAKER

THE epithet here attached to Bismarck is one that he would not have liked. For phrases, in the sense in which he commonly used the word, and for the makers of phrases he had the greatest contempt. For the illustrious von Gagern, the figurehead of the unsuccessful unity movements of 1848–1850, who exasperated the Prussian deputy by addressing him in private conversation "as if I (Bismarck) were a mass-meeting," his victim could find no worse name than "phrase-sprinkler," or, as Lowe renders it, "phrase watering-pot"; nor could Bismarck, the prime minister, invent any more derisive description for the Prussian Chamber of Deputies, when in the early sixties it was giving him the greatest annoyance, than "house of phrases." His dislike of Eugene Richter was based in part on Richter's *doctrinaire* politics, but it was due chiefly to the

fact that this deputy was one of the most indefatigable orators in German public life, possessing what Bismarck described as "the dangerous gift of eloquence." When Bismarck was in a fair state of health he could deal with Richter lightly. "I have neither time nor strength," he once said,

> to follow the speech of Deputy Richter through all its arguments. I share with you very often the pleasure of listening to a sample of his eloquence; and on such occasions I have precisely the same sensation as at a performance of *The Maid of Orleans*, where one is at first surprised by the endless triumphal procession, until, at the third march past, one remarks: "Good Lord! it is always the same people who are crossing the stage again in the same costumes!"

In his periods of illness and nervous exhaustion, Bismarck found Richter intolerable, and was wont to take refuge in a ministerial anteroom as often as the deputy ascended the tribune — a practice which called forth a clever German cartoon. Bismarck and Richter were drawn as the moving figures in the meteorological toy familiar to all Ger-

mans — the little "weather house" with two doors, in which "fair weather" conceals himself as often as "storm" emerges.

"Were I unable," said Bismarck, in 1882,

> to get on with a parliament, I should have had to leave my post long ago. With a parliament that had a majority of Richters, to be sure, I could not govern; with such a parliament nobody could govern.

Sixteen years earlier Bismarck had informed the Prussian deputies, in the vein of Mark Antony and with scarcely greater veracity:

> I am no orator. I am not able, by juggling with words, to work upon your feelings and obscure facts. My speech is simple and clear.

There are, however, many kinds of phrases, and the sort Bismarck had chiefly in mind when he denounced phrase-makers was the abstract sort. For generalizations Bismarck, like other men of action, had little use; "I sell theories," he said, "extraordinarily cheap"; and for those political ab-

stractions that have become the counters of modern political reasoning he had slight respect. A few citations will show how far his disrespect was carried:

"Freedom" is really used to designate rule. By "freedom of speech" is meant the rule of speakers; by "freedom of the press" is meant the predominant and preponderant influence of newspaper editors. Indeed, gentlemen — and I am not speaking as a sectarian — it happens often that "freedom of the church" is taken as meaning the rule of the priests.

By "the people" every one means what suits his purpose — ordinarily a random collection of individuals whom he has succeeded in winning over to his own views.

We are all of us "the people," and not solely the gentlemen who represent certain ancient claims and traditions termed "liberal.". . . I am one of the people. His majesty the emperor is one of the people.

If you expect to frighten me with the word "socialistic," I can only say that I have long ceased to be afraid of bogies.

In one of his earliest speeches he declared that French "equality" was "the daughter

of envy and greed" — an excellent illustration, by the way, of his adroitness in fighting a phrase with a phrase. At times it was his practice simply to turn a phrase or epithet, like a captured gun, upon its earlier possessors, leaving his hearers to judge whether he had not an equal right to use it. Thus he described some of the politicians of the opposition as "courtiers of the majority," and accused them of "Byzantinian servility to the populace." Here, however, we are out of the class of phrases we are now considering — the abstract phrases. For these his dislike was so great that he was not willing that they should be used on his own side. Thus he objected to the term "culture conflict" (*Kulturkampf*), declaring that in his struggle with the Roman hierarchy he was not fighting for "culture," but for the political interests of Prussia and of the empire.

Words and things are so commonly confounded that it is perhaps needful to say that Bismarck's attitude toward such terms as "the people" and "culture" — or rather his attitude toward what he regarded as the

abuse of these terms — implied no failure to appreciate the thing behind the word. It should also be noted that his love of the concrete and his dislike for the abstract were not at all equivalent to materialism and the rejection of ideals. It was Bismarck who, in one of his most remarkable speeches, alluded to "the imponderables that weigh heavier than all material weights."

In one of his letters from Frankfort, in which he discussed the possibility of a European coalition against Germany and endeavored to forecast the probable conduct of the smaller German states, Bismarck wrote:

> They will hardly feel called upon to sacrifice their existence to an idealistic loyalty to the German confederation, but will at once consider themselves bound to secure above all things the maintenance in each country of its hereditary dynasty; and the several governments, in their paternal wisdom, will decide when the precise moment has come at which anxiety for the welfare of their subjects renders desertion to the enemy a painful but unavoidable duty.

This passage is notable because the phrases that here are made to ring so hollow were the Conservative shibboleths of the day. It is notable from another point of view, because it exhibits an intensity of scorn combined with a quietness of utterance which reminds one, and not for the first or only time in reading Bismarck, of the *saeva indignatio* of the great Irish dean.

Another class of phrases that Bismarck disliked was the grandiloquent. "I hate big words," he said; and he met them, as he met abstractions, by inquiring what was behind them. When, in 1863, the English ambassador menaced Prussia with the wrath of Europe, Bismarck quietly asked: "Who is Europe?"

It must be admitted, however, that he occasionally used big words himself. "An appeal to fear finds no echo in German hearts" and "We Germans fear God and nothing else in the world" can hardly be put in any other class; and there are on record a few phrases about himself that sound rather big to English ears. "It is

the same to me whether I die for my king on the street pavement or on the battlefield," he said in 1866; but this was just after his hand-to-hand struggle with the assassin Cohen, and not long before Sadowa.

That outbursts of this sort were not really characteristic is shown not only by their infrequency, but by the fact that in his speeches almost every sentence of this character is followed by another of the driest and most prosaic sort, as if he regretted the momentary lapse into grandiloquence and was anxious to efface, if possible, the memory of the offense. One often cited and somewhat boastful passage is accompanied, in the full report, by a delicate bit of self-persiflage:

> In my political life, which through changing phases of European politics has been devoted always to the resolute representation of the interests of my king and my country, I have had the honor of making many enemies. Go from the Garonne — *to begin with Gascony* — to the Vistula, from the Belt to the Tiber, search at home along the courses of the Oder and the Rhine, and you will find, I am

proud to assert, that at this moment I am the most and the best hated person in this country.

Bismarck's most characteristic and most successful phrases were direct and terse statements of fact or of opinion. They caught the public ear in part by their audacity, which in some cases amounted to indiscretion, in part by their picturesqueness. They are remembered for their truth. Some of them have taken the rank of verified prophecies. The most famous of them all dates from 1862:

Not by speeches and resolutions of majorities are the great questions of the time decided — that was the mistake of 1848 and 1849 — but by iron and blood.[1]

[1] The speech in which this passage occurs was made in committee and was not officially reported. In the best newspaper reports it appeared in the form on which the above translation is based, and it appears in the same form in the collections of Bismarck's speeches. In some of the contemporary reports, however, the concluding words are given in the reverse order, "blood and iron"; and this version, which is illogical, because it puts the effect before the cause, but which is perhaps smoother, became popular; and in citing the phrase, in a speech delivered in 1886, Bismarck himself accepted the popular

Of the same date is the remark, which was made to the Austrian Count Karolyi, that "Austria should transfer its centre of gravity to Ofen." The frankness of this advice recalls a brief dialogue, which occurred a few years earlier, between Bismarck and a French diplomatist. "This policy," said the Frenchman, "will bring you to Jena." "Why not to Waterloo?" Bismarck inquired. Since Olmütz Prussia had been so trodden down and crowed over, that these audacities made every Prussian who had heard them breathe more freely. They produced the effect of a declaration of independence.

The phrase "iron and blood" is a good illustration of Bismarck's habit of saying things which others knew but did not quite dare to say. An earlier example was his answer, in 1850, to the grand duke of Hesse, who complained that the Prussian ambassador Canitz had been asking "indiscreet questions." Bismarck responded: "As a rule,

version. In the authorized French translation of his speeches, however, the phrase is given in both instances, 1862 and 1886, in the logical order: "*le fer et le sang.*"

diplomatists are paid to keep on asking questions until they get no more answers."

Truth and vigor of concrete illustration contributed to the success of Bismarck's statement, in 1876, that Germany's interests in Oriental affairs were not worth "the sound bones of a single Pomeranian musketeer." Equally exact, at the time, was his statement that "Russian nihilism is a climatic variation of radicalism (*Fortschritt*) rather than of socialism."

Of briefer phrases, "satisfied nations" is often attributed to Bismarck, but it was quoted from and credited to Metternich. "*Beati possidentes*" is doubtless older than Bismarck, but he made the words his own by the way in which he used them. "Conflict duties" or "fighting duties" (*Kampfzölle*) is Bismarck's, and the phrase holds its own as a pregnant and convenient description of economic policy. Less known but equally pregnant is the term "fighting laws" (*Kampfgesetze*), which he applied to the Prussian laws directed against the Roman hierarchy. While these measures

were in force, he described the statute-book as an "armory." When they were in process of abrogation he developed the metaphor, saying:

> If we think that we are on the eve of war and lay in stores of melinite and other explosives, we are not apt to regard these as permanent household furniture.

The conflict with the church ended in a truce. "Peace between king and priest," Bismarck said, "will always be a squaring of the circle, approximated but never fully reached."

Of similes and metaphors Bismarck made very frequent use. Of his similes, two things may be said. He always acted in accordance with Yellowplush's advice to Bulwer-Lytton, that when you are employing a simile "it's as well to have it *like*." And having found the comparison that was "like," Bismarck cared as little as Homer or Lincoln whether it was dignified or in accordance with the canons of a refined literary taste. To a parliamentary request, made at a time when new commercial treaties were known to be in

process of negotiation, that the government should inform the deputies what would be its maximum concessions, Bismarck replied with a comparison as homely and as unanswerable as any of Lincoln's:

> Any one who has ever bought or sold a horse will be loath, during such a deal, to tell a third person — possibly a very talkative third person — what is the most that he will pay or the least for which he will sell, for his minimum would at once become his maximum and his maximum the other party's minimum.

To an attack upon the military budget, he responded: "'Unproductive' in the same sense as the army are the dikes which protect the lowlands from inundation."

Bismarck used metaphors much more frequently than similes. Mixed metaphors occasionally occur in his speeches, but rarely, if ever, in his writings. When they are found, the intruding secondary metaphor is usually contained in a phrase so current that its figurative character is easily overlooked. His conscious metaphors are seldom of this well-worn sort and are often

strikingly novel. They are sometimes couched in a single word; witness his remark that direct taxes rest upon the tax-payers "with a certain angular brutality."

Some of the best of his metaphors and similes date from the period of his activity in the old Diet at Frankfort. He put in two words the situation of the smaller states, which at that time maintained an artificial independence under the protection of the greater, by saying that they were "under glass." The character of the confederation and its probable end he indicated as follows:

> With the Prussian horse hitched in front and the Austrian behind, the federal wagon must sooner or later go to pieces.

Prussia, he steadily maintained, had no interest in averting such a catastrophe.

> A war waged by Prussia for the confederation would strongly remind me of that Englishman who fought a sentry for the sake of hanging himself in the sentry-box.

Were Austria to be attacked by Russia and France, Prussia, he insisted, should stand aloof; otherwise

we should probably be beaten and perhaps bleed tunefully to death *pour les beaux yeux* of Austria and of the Diet.

"*Uns singend verbluten*" is a phrase of which Heine might well have been proud. Bismarck seldom permitted himself to become so nearly poetical — not even when, as in this instance, the intention was sarcastic. Equally out of his usual manner, and dangerously near eloquence, is a passage in one of his speeches, describing war as "the game of iron dice, in which the stakes are kings' and emperors' thrones." [1]

During the Crimean war, Bismarck strongly supported the policy of Prussian neutrality, and when it was ended he was in favor of keeping aloof from the congress of Paris. If Prussia went in, it was apparently necessary for it to accept a programme framed by Austria, France and England. In a confidential letter to Minister Manteuffel Bismarck cited a French friend who had said

[1] Both poetry and eloquence, however, are to be found in the Loki speech, cited on p. 184.

that there was "*trop d'inconnu*" in the programme, and went on:

> While the authors of the programme are presumably in accord among themselves as to the meaning of this "unknown," it is certainly inadvisable to pay a visit to three suspicious characters in a dark house, with every turn and corner of which they are accurately acquainted.

Frederick William IV was unduly anxious that Prussia should participate in the congress; and Austria, knowing this, was demanding pledges and concessions as the price of admission. Bismarck writes in the same letter:

> The greater and the more impatient desire to figure in the conferences that we permit to be discerned, *the higher the stick will be held that we must leap over to get in.* The cooler we show ourselves, the more surely I count on our being brought in with honor and with freedom.

This letter was shown to the king, as Bismarck doubtless meant it should be; and the undeveloped but perfectly indicated metaphor which is here italicized was better calculated than pages of grave protest to

make the king see the indignity of the part he was tempted to play.

In 1858 Bismarck pointed out that Austria's financial weakness increased its political influence. "The capitalists cleave to Austria as the physician cleaves to a paying patient."

When he became premier of Prussia, he told the military committee of the Diet, in the "iron and blood" speech, that Prussia was undoubtedly carrying "armor too heavy for its slim body" — a phrase that, like Motley's allusion to "Prussia's wasp-waist," becomes intelligible after a single glance at a map of the period. His conclusion, of course, was not that the armor should be lightened, but that the body should be made stouter.

After the victory of Sadowa, Bismarck had "the thankless task of pouring water into the foaming wine," that is, of convincing the king and the military party that they had not conquered Europe and that they should give Austria easy terms for the sake of speedy peace. He had his troubles,

too, with the first North German parliament in 1867, when the deputies were disposed to spend too much time in debating the provisions of the new constitution; and his famous exhortation: "Let us put Germany in the saddle: it will surely be able to ride," brought the assembly from the clouds to the solid earth and secured fairly prompt action.

When, in the same year, Baden, the only South German state in which at the time the German unity party was in the majority, asked for admission to the North German confederation, Bismarck pronounced it unwise "to skim the cream off the milk and let the rest turn sour."

During the European complications which followed the Russian-Turkish war, and which were afterwards adjusted at the congress of Berlin, Bismarck deemed it of the highest importance to indicate, in a way that could not be misunderstood, the attitude of Germany. He said:

> In mediating peace, I do not conceive that . . . we are to play the arbiter and say: "So it shall be, and behind this stands the power of the German em-

pire"; on the contrary, I think of our part as more modest . . . rather as that of an honest broker, who really wishes to bring the trade to a conclusion.

Tiedemann tells us that the prince searched for a couple of days before he found the "honest broker" phrase, working out and discarding in the meantime several less simple comparisons.

Less known but quotable is his statement that a government should wear "the clean linen of a civilized nation."

Discussing the insecurity of peaceful conditions in the modern world, Bismarck said:

Every country is held at some time to account for the windows broken by its press; the bill is presented, some day or other, in the shape of hostile sentiment in the other country.

And again:

The political relations between two great states may be compared to the position of two travellers in a lonely forest who do not know each other and neither of whom quite trusts the other. If the one puts his hand in his pocket, the other cocks his revolver, and if he hears the first one's hammer click, he at once fires.

To describe a situation is not to justify it. In a speech already quoted Bismarck coined a phrase that will bear requoting: he said that a war started to anticipate a possible attack was "suicide in apprehension of death."

Bismarck did not enjoy seeing statues of himself: "It disturbs me," he said, "to stand beside myself as a sort of fossil." When he left Berlin after his dismissal he received a great popular ovation. "The Berliners," he said, "gave me a first-class funeral." And later, in his retirement at Friedrichsruh:

> Passions are like the trout in my pond: one devours the other until but one fat old trout is left. In my case the passion for politics has in the course of time devoured all the rest.

Figures of speech, like other phrases, can be turned against their makers; and one phrase which Bismarck launched in parliament was promptly captured by the Radicals and has since sailed under their flag. In justifying the application of the income of the

sequestrated Hanoverian crown property to secret police purposes, he said, in 1869:

> I was not born to be a spy; the part is foreign to my whole nature; but I believe that we deserve your thanks if we subject ourselves to the task of following noxious reptiles into their holes to observe what they are doing.

This remark not only resulted in the Guelf property being commonly described as the "reptile-fund," but it has made "reptile" a current term to describe, not a conspirator, but a secret agent of the government.

That Bismarck possessed both wit and humor has been abundantly shown by the sayings already cited. Some of his phrases, however, owe their popularity so entirely to one or the other of these qualities that they deserve separate notice. The best of them, perhaps, is his reply to the German prince who had received the offer of a crown in the Balkan peninsula, and who asked him whether he would advise its acceptance. "By all means," said the chancellor, "it will be a delightful recollection." The popular in-

stinct, which seldom errs in such things, has assigned the role of questioner in this anecdote to Alexander of Battenberg, sometime prince of Bulgaria, and has thus given to Bismarck's jest the value of a prophecy. The historian Sybel, however, has been unkind enough to tell us that the prince in question was Charles of Hohenzollern and the crown that of Rumania.

If "wit is but wisdom to advantage dressed," place may be given here to a sentence from one of Bismarck's Frankfort letters. Baron Reitzenstein, who had been the Prussian member of the federal military commission, had regularly failed to secure such action as the Prussian government desired and had been recalled. Bismarck explained that this officer's display of superior technical training had antagonized the other members of the commission; and he suggested that the baron's successor should

> unite with the other requirements for his post . . . the capacity of making tolerant and conciliatory use of his superior knowledge.

Bismarck's humor was often grim. When, in 1871, the French plenipotentiaries protested against the size of the contribution which he proposed to exact from Paris, "Paris," Bismarck replied, "is a great city; let us not show it any lack of respect." Slightly grim, again, was his defence of "the coupon-cutters" against a socialistic attack. He pronounced them

> an estimable class of citizens, and one that the government may well desire to see greatly increased in numbers, because they combine wealth with a certain timidity.

In lighter vein was the explanation given to parliament, in 1878, of his reason for dissolving it and ordering new elections. He had done this, he said, that the deputies might discuss the situation with their constituents "and return strengthened, like Antæus, by contact with their domestic earth." At another time, in pleading for a cessation of reforms and a season of recuperation, he said:

Let us leave our children a problem or two: they might find the world very tiresome if there were nothing left for them to do.

Of a subtler and more imaginative type is the humor of another passage:

In my position as minister-president in Prussia and chancellor in the empire I am perhaps rather the point on which the expression of discontent is focused; and I may say that whenever I find myself in any private situation, in a railway carriage, a social gathering or the like, I note in many people the sort of satisfaction which a discontented farmer would feel if he had before him the weather personified.

Bismarck's comparisons and illustrations were drawn more often from life than from his library, and comparatively few of his best phrases were suggested by books. In his writings, his speeches and his table-talk there is, however, an abundance of literary and historical allusions. He drew occasionally on mythology, classical and German; and in 1885 he gave to the Baldur myth a political interpretation that will long be remembered:

A peculiar prophetic foresight lies in our old German myth. As often as it fares well with the Germans, as often as a German national springtime opens, our Loki is at hand, and always finds his Hödur — a dull half-witted fellow whom he adroitly instigates to kill the German people's spring.

. . . Partisan dissension grows rampant; and if this partisan spirit appeals with its Loki-voice to Hödur, the elector, . . . to strike his fatherland dead, then it is this Loki whom I arraign before God and before history. . . .

While Bismarck often cited or paraphrased German authors, his writings and speeches show that none of these had exerted upon him so strong an influence as Shakespeare. It is clear that he had read and reread many of the plays, both in the original and in translation. Apart from direct quotations, which are frequent, there are in his speeches many reminiscences of Shakespearian phrases. "I believe," he said, "that I serve God in serving my king"; and he once censured "the sickly pallor of mistrust" of the government which he noted on the faces of the deputies. If this last illustration seems

doubtful, compare Shakespeare's phrase in the German version, "*des Gedankens Blässe angekränkelt*," with Bismarck's "*kranke Blässe des Mistrauens*." No such comparison is needed to show that Bismarck had a Shakespearian passage in mind when he prophesied the advent of politicians who would "out-richter Richter."

In literature as in life Bismarck took whatever suited his purpose; and two of his best literary illustrations are drawn from German operas. In 1856 he wrote that Austria "will play Don Juan with all the cabinets if it can misuse so sturdy a Leporello as Prussia"; and in 1849 he made a striking comparison between the bargain which the German democracy wished to drive with Frederick William IV and the pact between the devil and the huntsman in *Der Freischütz:*

> It will not be long before the radicals come to the new emperor with the imperial arms and ask him: "Do you think this eagle was given you for nothing?"

Of history few contemporary statesmen, even in Germany, had a knowledge so broad and so minute as was Bismarck's. Of this knowledge he made effective use in debate; but the list of Bismarckian phrases based on history is a short one. "Catilinarian existences" is still cited, and also the statement that the annual voting of the army bill would turn the royal army into "a parliamentary army"; but the only really famous phrase of historical origin is the sentence launched during the conflict with the Roman Catholic church: "We are not on the road to Canossa."

That Bismarck knew his Bible was often indicated. When the conflict with the church was at its height, he said, in reply to a Centrist deputy:

> The pope is not to me the successor of Peter in the sense indicated by Count Brühl. Peter was not infallible.

In this conflict the high-church Lutherans supported the Roman Catholics. Later, as then, Bismarck found in the political ac-

tivities of some of the Protestant clergy justification for his statement that the "freedom of the church" was sometimes taken to mean priestly rule. Counselling Prince William to avoid too close association with the enterprises of Pastor Stöcker, Bismarck explained that he had nothing against Stöcker as a politician except that he was a priest, nor anything against him as a priest except that he meddled in politics; and he added:

> The Evangelical priest, as soon as he finds himself strong enough, is as much inclined to theocracy as is the Catholic; and he is harder to deal with because he has no pope over him.

Bismarck's power of condensed statement gave to many of his phrases the form of the aphorism and to some that of the proverb. Several of the sayings already quoted might be cited again, by way of illustration; but the following will suffice:

> The dread of responsibility is a disease of our time.
>
> The world cannot be ruled from below.

A great state cannot be governed according to party views.

The majority has no heart.

Any one who can make promises can get himself elected.

The more constitutional, the more expensive.

A chamber is more easily mobilized than an army.

In negotiating with Austria, every concession is the mother of a new demand.

Concessions and gifts are dishes that whet the appetite without satisfying it.

Liberated peoples are not grateful but exacting.

We cannot hasten the course of time by setting our clocks forward.

We cannot ripen fruit by setting lamps under the trees.

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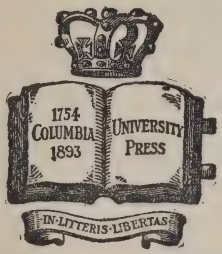

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